

Fukushima-is-still-news

- vol. 11 –

Anti-Nuclear Activity-Opinion



Odile Girard



Référence bibliographique

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INTRODUCTION

J'ai « découvert » l'écologie au début des années 70, croisant dans le même temps la pollution, les luttes paysannes et la malbouffe, la médecine qui avait (déjà) perdu son âme, les mouvements sociaux et bien sûr le nucléaire qui a occupé une grande partie de ma vie.

Après la catastrophe de mars 2011 au Japon, j'ai suivi chaque jour une partie des grands journaux japonais anglophones pour essayer de sauvegarder un maximum d'articles ayant trait à Fukushima. L'idée était de conserver une sorte d'archive accessible à tous, qu'ils soient écrivains, journalistes ou tout simplement intéressés.

Le blog « [Fukushima-is-still-news](http://fukushima-is-still-news.com) » a été poursuivi jusqu'en 2019. Ci-dessous, la conclusion parue le jour où j'ai décidé d'arrêter mon blog.

End of March 2019: Time to stop this blog

29 Mars 2019

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I have been collecting and spreading information on the Fukushima disaster for more than 8 years.

More than ever I am convinced that the name of my blog « Fukushima-is-still-news » was aptly chosen. Or perhaps i should have called it « Fukushima should still be news ». What i'm getting at is that i know the disaster is going on and we cannot simply forget Fukushima and turn the page. But the mode of action I chose 8 years ago has its limits and it is time for me to stop this blog.

I don't want the contents to be lost, so I will try and publish the lot with the Éditions de Fukushima so that the information remains available online.

Good bye for now. I am not doing a disappearing act. I'm still there tracking what's going on in the world of nukes.

C'est maintenant chose faite. Le blog *fukushima-is-still-news* est désormais disponible aux Éditions de Fukushima. Une fois de plus merci à mon ami Pierre, qui m'a convaincue à l'époque de tenir ce blog et m'a aidée à le lancer.

Odile Girard

Avertissement

La mise en page de dizaines de milliers de pages étant trop fastidieuse, nous avons préféré dans un premier temps éditer les volumes 7 à 16 sans mise en page particulière plutôt que de risquer de ne jamais les éditer. Chacun de ces livres est donc, dans la version présente, constitué des articles du blog copiés de manière brute. Les articles sont disposés a priori chronologiquement. Nous nous excusons donc pour l'absence de table des matières. La recherche peut toutefois facilement être effectuée par mot clé avec la fonction CTRL + F

Le présent volume est le onzième d'une collection de 16 ouvrages :

Vol. 1 : Daiichi Nuclear Plant (2012-2014)

Vol. 2 : Daiichi Nuclear Plant (2015-2019)

**Vol. 3 : Radioactive Fallout And Waste,
No.4 Fuel Removal,
Nuclear Workers,
and UN Conference**

Vol. 4 : Nuke Safety (2012-2015)

Vol. 5 : Nuke Safety (2016-2019)

**Vol. 6 : Reprocessing,
Storage Nuclear Waste,
and Decommissioning**

**Vol. 7 : Practical Problems For The Japanese Population
2012-2014**

**Vol. 8 : Practical Problems For The Japanese Population
2015-2017**

**Vol. 9 : Practical Problems For The Japanese Population
2018-2019**

**Vol. 10 : Health Effects Of Radiation
and Collateral Effects**

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Vol. 12 : Vested Interests - Transparency - Corruption (1)

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and Olympics**

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**Vol. 15 : Nuclear Future,
Start Again,
and New Techniques - Alternatives & Renewables**

Vol. 16 : Books & Films

Minamata/Fukushima

March 4, 2012

Anti-nuclear Activity

Anti-nuclear activist sees commonalities between Minamata and Fukushima

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120304p2a00m0na005000c.html>

According to Aileen Mioko Smith, who together with her late husband, the photographer Eugene Smith, drew the world's attention to one of Japan's most far-reaching pollution-caused diseases, the ongoing Fukushima nuclear crisis and Minamata disease have many things in common.

"Inequality," said Smith, when asked what it is that both disasters have. It was not the government's inaction that she brought up first, but rather the unfairness of it all.

"Minamata disease emerged when major Japanese chemical manufacturer Chisso Corp. found itself lagging behind its competitors in the industry's switch to petrochemicals, decided to sacrifice Minamata (Kumamoto Prefecture), and made money from it. While environmental contamination was forced onto Minamata, Chisso Corp.'s headquarters flourished," Smith said. "The same can be said of Fukushima. If the nuclear power plants had been built in Tokyo, no energy loss would have been incurred through electric power transmission. But the plants were built in Fukushima, and Tokyo enjoyed the electrical power. The structure of inequality, in which someone gains and someone loses, is the same."

In other words, the regional areas of Japan are sacrificed for the large cities.

"If we think about it in terms of 'damage times the number of residents,' you could say there'd be less total damage in the sparsely-populated countryside than in a major city. But doesn't such thinking ignore the value of each and every life? For each individual, sustaining any harm is already a 100-percent loss."

Smith's personal experiences began with her seeing the world from the inside of foreign-made cars. Born to an American father who was in the international trade business and a Japanese mother, it was through the windows of her father's cars that Smith saw the demonstrations against the U.S.-Japan security agreement in 1960 and poor children in Hong Kong and Vietnam leaping onto the very cars she was riding in. She felt guilt swelling up inside her, and longed to be on the outside.

After her parents divorced, the 11-year-old Smith went to stay with her grandparents in the U.S. She had been discriminated for being of mixed race while in Japan, but once she arrived in St. Louis, she was looked down upon for being Japanese. Her yearning for Japan building, Smith vowed never to tolerate those who looked condescendingly upon Japan and the rest of Asia.

At the root of Smith's disdain for inequality, then, was her wavering childhood status as victimizer and victim, the oppressor and the oppressed.

At age 20, Smith met the world-renowned photographer Eugene Smith, who was 52 years old at the time. They married and relocated to Minamata, where they took pictures. Smith served also as an interpreter for her husband, who spoke no Japanese. They accompanied Minamata disease patients to trials, and spent days and nights with them. Ever since she reported on the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, the year after her husband's death, Smith has been an avid anti-nuclear advocate based in Kyoto.

After the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011 triggered a nuclear disaster, Smith has visited Fukushima numerous times as the head of an environmental civic organization. She has also staged sit-ins in tents set up in front of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI).

"I've written out the things that Minamata disease and the Fukushima nuclear crisis have in common," Smith said, placing two sheets of paper on the table in front of her. The list was titled: "The 10 Strategies Taken by the State, Prefectural Governments, Academic Flunkies and Companies in the cases of Minamata and Fukushima."*

Smith explained: "No one has made it clear who is responsible for the nuclear disaster. It's not even clear who set the evacuation standard of '20 millisieverts of radiation per year.' Government bodies make use of their own sectionalism to pin the blame on each other, saying 'It's the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology' or 'No, it's under the jurisdiction of the Nuclear Safety Commission.'

"Even though there's said to be no such thing as a 'safe' amount of exposure to radiation, authorities intentionally release the vague suggestion that 'being exposed to 100 millisieverts of radiation per year is all right,' further confusing victims. These are tactics that we saw the government and academics use all too much with the case of Minamata disease."

Smith is critical also of the Fukushima prefectural residents' health management survey conducted by the prefectural government, saying: "Its starting point is the conclusion that radiation exposure levels are not too bad, and is merely a strategy to minimize eligibility for compensation."

What pains Smith the most are the rifts appearing among disaster victims. "A teacher in Fukushima Prefecture who temporarily took time off from work immediately after the outbreak of the nuclear disaster to help evacuate family members was slammed as a 'coward' and 'traitor' from colleagues... Everyone's scared. And precisely because they so desperately want to overcome this together, people are unable to forgive those who leave Fukushima."

The people Smith sees in Fukushima look to her a lot like what she saw in Minamata. In both, things reach a reconciliation or go to trial.

"The Minamata victims also broke down into several factions, and were pushed into corners where they couldn't help hurting each other. The scars remain even today, some 50 years later," Smith said. And this is all the more reason she wants to offer this to the Fukushima victims: "To flee or not to flee. Whether one is even able to flee or not. Clashes are taking place in cities, places of work, and even families. But stop and think. It was the state and (Fukushima plant operator) Tokyo Electric Power Co. that pulled us apart. Who is going to gain from clashes among the victims?"

On March 11, 2011, Smith was in the U.S. with her daughter, enjoying some time off for the first time in a while. What went through her mind when she saw television footage of the Fukushima nuclear plant in crisis was that "many decades worth of suffering was about to begin." Just like the years of suffering that the Minamata disease had wrought.

Minamata disease, a neurological syndrome caused by mercury that was dumped into Minamata Bay by Chisso Corp., was officially recognized by the government in 1956. In 2004, the Supreme Court practically overturned Minamata certification standards set in 1977, saying they were "too narrow." In 2009, the government passed a law on special measures for compensation of Minamata disease patients, but has decided to close registration for compensation claims by the end of July 2012. This has patient advocacy groups, whose fight has continued for half a century, up in arms that the government continues to write off Minamata victims.

"The leaders of Minamata advocacy groups are now in their fifties. These are people who, as young children, ingested fish that were tainted with mercury. It makes me wonder every time I go to Fukushima.

I don't want to create a reality where the only choice we have when those who are young children now ask us in the future: 'What were you adults doing at the time?' is to apologize."

As I went to stand up after speaking with Smith for three hours, she stopped me and said: "I want you to understand this much."

"Having been involved in both Minamata and Fukushima, there are times when I begin to fall under the illusion that I live in the same world as the victims, but that's not true. The suffering of the victims cannot be understood unless you are in their position. To be aware of the fact that I cannot understand how they feel, and yet advocate on behalf of and face the victims straight-on is a frightening thing to do.

"But still, I think I will keep using my voice. Because I want both the people who live in Fukushima and the people who fled Fukushima to realize that as with the Minamata victims, they, too, have been forced into opposition with each other. By re-examining this fact, perhaps they can find some measure of comfort or salvation."

"The 10 Strategies Taken by the State, Prefectural Governments, Academic Flunkies and Companies in the Cases of Minamata and Fukushima"

1. Do not take responsibility. Use sectionalism to pin blame on others.
2. Confuse victims and public opinion, creating the impression that there are pros and cons on each side.
3. Position victims in conflict with each other.
4. Do not record data or leave evidence.
5. Stall for time.
6. Conduct tests or surveys that will produce underestimated results on damage.
7. Wear victims down until they give up.
8. Create an official certification system that narrows down victim numbers.
9. Do not release information abroad.
10. Call on academic flunkies to hold international conferences.

(By Ayako Oguni, Evening Edition Department)

No more nukes?

EDITORIAL: Nuclear-free society can be achieved much earlier

March 03, 2012 - <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201203030025>

There is now no nuclear reactor in western Japan that is generating electricity. The two reactors that are still in operation in Japan, both located in eastern parts of the nation, are scheduled to be shut down soon for regular maintenance.

If the current situation remains unchanged, Japan's power supply system will be left without a single reactor operating in May.

But there has been no power shortage, with the supply-demand situation kept stable. As demand for heating declines, there will be even more surplus power capacity.

During the nearly one year from the March 11 disaster last year, the public stance toward power conservation has changed markedly, from a passive, "have-to" attitude to a willingness to rise to the challenge. Such a positive attitude toward power-saving efforts is spreading among both businesses and households across the nation. The past year has proved that saving electricity is the largest power source.

To be sure, the power supply system is strained to meet demand, with old, once-mothballed thermal power plants being operated to compensate for the loss of nuclear power generation capacity. It is also undeniable that concerns about a power crunch are restricting economic activities.

Still, the efforts to reduce power consumption are not stalling the economy or causing serious confusion in people's lives.

Rather, **it is looking increasingly realistic to pursue a strategy designed to lay the foundation for renewed economic growth by reforming economic and social systems through power saving.**

This brings us to the question of whether Japan really needed to build as many as 54 nuclear reactors in the first place.

Increasing feasibility of a nuclear-free society

In our editorial published in July last year, we laid out a vision of a society without nuclear power generation. In that editorial, we said it would probably be possible for Japan to phase out nuclear power generation in 20 to 30 years.

However, given the fact that peak demand in August last year was fulfilled with only 12 to 16 reactors online, it now seems that vision could be realized far earlier.

Such new facts and assumptions about power supply and demand should lead to a fundamental change in the thinking behind the government's nuclear power policy. That is, a shift from the idea of operating reactors because they are safe to the principle of operating only the number of reactors really needed.

The focus of attention is now on the issue of restarting the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors of the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, operated by Kansai Electric Power Co. The two reactors have been idled since they were shut down for regular safety checks.

The Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) has examined "primary assessments" of the stress tests on the two reactors submitted by the utility and declared the reports to be "appropriate."

But the stress tests required by the government as a condition for putting idled reactors back online only cover important equipment and facilities and don't assess the safety of an entire nuclear power plant. These safety tests consider the risks of major earthquakes and tsunami but don't factor in the risks of other possible accidents like fires.

The NISA's judgment that the assessments were "appropriate" doesn't guarantee the safety of the facilities but only indicates that the calculations involved had been correct.

In making decisions on whether to restart a reactor, the top priority should be on ensuring that the safety standards and disaster-prevention measures will be enhanced through efforts based on the lessons learned from the Fukushima nuclear accident. It is also vital to establish a better crisis management system to make sure that when an unexpected situation occurs effective second-best measures will be taken to limit the damage.

This process, however, will take time. It will not be finished by the summer peak demand season. If it is certain that there will be a power shortage this summer, some reactors will have to be reactivated according to provisional safety standards.

But that should be allowed only when reliable demand and supply estimates that take account of possible power supplies from other utilities and the effects of power-saving efforts have been presented.

Utilities' desire to crawl back to status quo

The power utilities' campaign to warn the public about a power shortage following the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant has apparently been divorced from reality.

The companies responsible for power supply should, of course, guard against unpredictable troubles.

But many Japanese suspect that the power industry, for the sake of its own interests, is only trying to restart one reactor after another, starting with the reactors at the Oi plant.

The utilities' argument for bringing idled reactors back online will cut little ice with the wary public as long as they have such suspicions.

To win public support for resuming the operations of reactors, the government must at least declare that only the minimum necessary number of reactors will be restarted even if it becomes clear that nuclear power generation is indispensable for meeting power demand in this summer.

How many reactors will be restarted by summer? Or will there be none online? What kind of effects would such a situation have on the nation's economy and society? How will electricity rates change in the coming months?

Projections about these factors should be incorporated into the medium- and long-term road maps toward a nuclear-free future.

What is important is the viewpoint of which reactors should be shut down, not the question of how to restart halted reactors.

The first thing to do is to swiftly establish new nuclear safety standards and a framework of measures to deal with crises and prevent disasters.

Then, it is necessary to classify the existing reactors according to their safety risks and decide which of them should be scrapped.

In taking these steps, it is crucial to give sufficient consideration to the costs of disaster prevention and evacuation measures, which have been disregarded for far too long.

There are some decisions that can be made immediately. They are the decisions to decommission aged reactors. There are 19 reactors in Japan that have been in service for 30 or more years, including those at the Fukushima No. 1 plant. And three of them are over 40 years old.

There is a strong case for shutting down such aged reactors before conducting detailed safety inspections. This is an approach based on the so-called precautionary principle, which is given much importance in Europe and some other parts of the world.

Facing up to the nuclear dangers

In its interim report, the government's investigative committee that has looked into the Fukushima meltdown called for "a paradigm shift" in the policy efforts to prevent and deal with disasters.

That would require confronting the reality that nuclear power generation is inherently dangerous.

Until now, electric power companies, politicians and experts have all been overlooking this reality.

This attitude created the myth that nuclear power generation is safe. As a result, there had been no constructive debate between the pro-nuclear and the anti-nuclear camps when the Fukushima disaster took place.

To build national consensus on bringing the nation toward a future without atomic energy, **it is necessary to start a fresh policy debate by taking a hard look at the undeniable reality that nuclear power generation is dangerous.**

--The Asahi Shimbun, Feb. 27

What to do about nukes

March 7, 2012

Editorial: Time to say goodbye to nuclear power

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/perspectives/news/20120307p2a00m0na003000c.html>

The illusion of nuclear power safety has been torn out by the root. The Fukushima nuclear disaster that followed the great waves of March 11 last year made sure of that.

What, we wondered at the time, would happen if the reactor vessels exploded? How far would the radioactive contamination spread? Even thinking of it now, nearly a year on, makes one feel crushed.

Economic concerns, however, have begun to wear down the fear of nuclear disaster. And so, as we consider our nuclear power and energy policy's future, we must remember what the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant meltdowns have done to Japan, the pain of the people who have lost their hometowns, and the radioactive contamination that will blight the landscape for decades to come.

Unfortunately, that it makes us so uneasy to think about this speaks volumes about the state of politics in Japan.

First of all, the government has indeed begun to hammer out plans to reduce the country's dependence on nuclear power, and there are no whisperings that this will be overturned. On the other hand, we have yet to see an overall vision or process on how the government will evaluate the risks associated with nuclear power and advance policy to decouple our economy from it.

And all the while, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Yukio Edano alludes to how important it is to restart reactors now idled for regular maintenance. He says these restarts can only go ahead after confirming the state of electricity supply and demand, reactor safety, and with local approval.

Nevertheless, we cannot accept the push for reactor restarts.

If the government is going to talk up the necessity of getting reactors back into operation, shouldn't it first lay out a mid- to long-term plan to get Japan off nuclear power? The government must furthermore analyze the risks of restarting reactors in this earthquake-prone country versus the risks of keeping them shut down, and reveal to all of us exactly how many reactors must be put back online in the short term.

That is, not only must Japan move toward reducing nuclear power, the government must also rank the various risks involved. Even if it's a given that all badly aging reactors and all reactors of the same model as those at the Fukushima No. 1 plant must be shuttered, how are other risks to be evaluated? The very criteria for making these decisions are straying off course, and that is a problem.

Following the lead of European nations, the government is implementing two-stage "stress tests" to check reactor safety, and has decided to base reactor restarts on the results of the first stage. Already, the industry ministry's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) has issued passing grades for the No. 3 and 4 reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant. Now, the government will try to win local approval for the restart of the two reactors while reserving the final decision on putting them back in operation for itself. There is, however, an element of the impossible in this.

First of all, the exact causes of the Fukushima No. 1 plant meltdowns have not yet been determined. Furthermore, revisions to safety guarantee guidelines are still only half-way done, and distrust of both NISA and the power companies -- which are at the core of the stress test evaluations -- remains strong. It should also be pointed out that the European stress tests are designed to find weak points in individual reactors, not to approve whole rosters of reactors for restart.

If the government is going to call for the restart of idled reactors, then temporary standards for approving or failing them are needed. We believe that the results of the stress tests should be compared to determine

the relative risks involved with each reactor, and that this should contribute to decisions on shutting them down permanently.

The Fukushima crisis has also exposed the dangers of spent nuclear fuel pools. Unlike the reactor cores themselves, the pools have very little covering them, meaning that massive amounts of radioactive material can spew into the environment if the pool water disappears. That this did not happen with the spent fuel pool at the Fukushima plant's No. 4 reactor building is simply luck.

There are well over 10,000 metric tons of spent uranium fuel rods at Japan's nuclear plants. Across the globe, nuclear plant operators are now transitioning from "wet" storage in pools to "dry" storage methods for spent fuel. These dry methods use natural air cooling systems, meaning no risk of disaster from a liquid coolant failure. There are in fact dry storage facilities at the Fukushima No. 1 plant and at the Japan Atomic Power Co.'s Tokai No. 2 nuclear power station. Authorities must quickly analyze what effect earthquakes and tsunami could have on these dry systems and seriously consider implementing them.

Also on spent fuel, we strongly urge the Japanese government to put an end to its nuclear fuel cycle program that -- if it ever emerged from the thicket of delays, malfunctions and cost overruns in which it now finds itself entangled -- would reprocess spent fuel for reuse in specially designed "MOX" and "pluthermal" reactors. Even if reprocessing went ahead and the "fast-breeder" reactors went online, the technology, its safety and cost do not balance out.

According to a Japan Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) subcommittee report, considering the economic impact and nuclear proliferation risks, over the next 20-30 years simply disposing of spent fuel would be better than going ahead with the nuclear fuel cycle program. There is, therefore, absolutely no justification for letting work at the Rokkasho reprocessing plant in Aomori Prefecture go on. Even now, Japan's buildup of plutonium stocks has become a problem in terms of the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation.

The fuel reprocessing project is, however, also being used as the reason to rid nuclear plants of their spent fuel rods. This positioning must be done away with, and the treatment of the rods included in an overall rethink of nuclear energy policy.

It is necessary to instill the idea that those who benefit from nuclear power are responsible for dealing with its byproducts, spent fuel rods chief among them. Knowing that not just the profits but the risks of nuclear power belong to them, these parties will take a greater hand in the move to abandon it.

Meanwhile, the decommissioning of the Fukushima No. 1 plant will continue -- for decades. Building any new plants has also been rendered effectively impossible. These circumstances have raised concerns over where Japan's nuclear professionals will end up.

We believe, however, that this concern needs to be reframed. There are more than 430 nuclear reactors in the world, and one by one they will all reach the end of their service lives. Regardless of the future paths of nuclear policies around the world, there will be plenty of reactors that need to be shut down.

Of course the end of the Fukushima No. 1 reactors will be very different from a standard decommissioning, but engineers will gain a lot of experience from the project. The development of robots and remote control devices for Fukushima could become Japan's trump card in the global reactor decommissioning business. Furthermore, we can turn Fukushima into a hub of nuclear research, including in the nuclear safety, radioactive substance management and decontamination fields, and attract foreign talent.

After more than 40 years of nuclear power generation in Japan or, to put it another way, more than 40 years of procrastination on what to do with nuclear waste, we are now faced with the problem of how to get rid of it. This is yet another issue the government must make progress on.

[Click here for the original Japanese story](#)

Most municipalities concerned

March 8, 2012

Survey: Most municipalities wary of nuclear plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120308_26.html

An NHK survey has found that nearly 80 percent of municipalities hosting or located near nuclear power plants are wary about resuming operations at reactors that are offline for regular inspections.

The survey covered 20 prefectures and 122 cities, towns and villages not in Fukushima Prefecture. Each municipality is within 30 kilometers of a nuclear power plant.

Only 3 of the municipalities, or 2 percent, said they would give the go-ahead for resuming reactor operations. 12 percent said they would eventually.

But 75 percent said they would not allow resumption for the time being or cannot yet decide, and 4 percent said they would never allow resumption.

The municipalities expressed concerns about the effectiveness of safety measures at the reactors, and complained that the central government is not doing what it should.

Asked what's important in deciding on whether to restart reactors, 63 percent said a satisfactory investigation into the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant almost a year ago. 59 percent cited understanding by local residents, and 58 percent said new government safety regulations.

Only 17 percent cited stress testing, which the government views as a prerequisite for deciding whether to resume reactor operations.

Only 2 of Japan's 54 nuclear reactors are now running, but are to be shut down by late April.

Mayors against nukes

Nearly 60 percent of mayors in disaster-hit areas want nuclear power stations abolished

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120308p2a00m0na017000c.html>

Nearly 60 percent of the heads of local governments in areas hit by the March 11, 2011 triple disasters have called for the abolition of nuclear power plants, according to a Mainichi survey.

The Mainichi Shimbun surveyed the mayors of 42 municipalities in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures affected by the disasters triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake prior to the first anniversary of the catastrophe.

In Fukushima Prefecture that hosts the crippled nuclear plant, 12 out of 15 mayors surveyed said all nuclear reactors should be decommissioned, compared with eight in a survey conducted just six months after the disasters.

Seven of the mayors of the Miyagi Prefecture municipalities called for the abolition of nuclear power stations, jumping from one in the previous survey. Iwate Prefecture saw a slight decline from six to five. The results show local communities in Iwate and Miyagi prefectures that are suffering from groundless rumors about radiation contamination are also hoping for less dependence on nuclear energy.

Katsunobu Sakurai, mayor of Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, seeks the total abolition of nuclear plants in the long run because "it has become clear that the safety of residents and the environment is not guaranteed." Some areas of the city have been designated as either no-go zones or planned evacuation zones.

Norio Kanno, mayor of Iitate, Fukushima Prefecture, said, "If Japan declares it will seek economic growth through nuclear power stations, the international community will turn its back on us."

On the other hand, Toshiami Watanabe, mayor of Okuma where part of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant is situated, pointed to the need of such power stations.

"It's difficult to secure substitute energy sources if all the nuclear power stations in Japan are stopped," he said. "The minimum necessary plants should be retained while safety regulations are stiffened."

Yoshiaki Suda, mayor of Onagawa, home to the Onagawa nuclear plant, urged the government and businesses to step up efforts to develop substitute energy sources while reactivating nuclear power stations for as long as it is possible.

[Click here for the original Japanese story](#)

Fukushima Governor on nukes and renewables

One year on, Fukushima governor vows to replace atomic power with green energy

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120308p2a00m0na009000c.html>

Nearly one year after the outbreak of Japan's worst nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, Fukushima Gov. Yuhei Sato has said he will strive to rebuild the disaster-stricken prefecture swiftly to help local residents return home, nurture new industries to revitalize the badly-damaged local economy, and promote renewable energy to replace nuclear power generation.

The Mainichi interviewed Gov. Sato ahead of the first anniversary of the March 11, 2011, triple disasters.

The following are key questions and answers in the interview:

Question: Looking back on the past year, what do you think now?

Answer: Many residents of Fukushima Prefecture had to evacuate in and out of the prefecture and they have been going through a lot of hardships. We must take steps to help them return home as soon as possible. Setting this year as the "year of restoration," we crafted a plan for Fukushima Prefecture last December. Although I want to bring back the beauty of Fukushima, whenever I go to Tokyo, I have a feeling that public awareness of the nuclear disaster is diminishing. I want the people of Japan and the people of the world to share the nuclear accident with us and not forget it.

Q: Among reconstruction efforts, what would you give priority to?

A: One of the pillars of the reconstruction plan is to ensure residents can "live their lives with a sense of security." We will try to restore the environment by decontaminating and providing health care in particular. Secondly, we will ensure they can "work in their hometowns." While revitalizing the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries as well as smaller businesses, we want to create new industries to create jobs.

Q: You have decided to seek the decommissioning of all reactors in Fukushima Prefecture, but how would you nurture an energy industry alternative to nuclear power generation?

A: As the entire prefecture was battered by the accident, we must introduce industries that can play a leading role in a new era. One of them is renewable energy. We want to turn the prefecture into a cutting-edge region by making the most of regional resources such as hydraulic power, wind power, solar light and biomass.

Q: How would you protect the health of residents of Fukushima Prefecture, particularly children?

Answer: We will conduct health-care inquiries to properly keep track of the health of the residents of the prefecture over a long period of time. Aiming to turn Fukushima into the safest prefecture in Japan where parents can raise their children, we will have our own measures to provide medical care to people aged up to 18 for free.

Q: What measures are you planning to take to restore consumer confidence in agricultural products?

A: Because the most important thing is to have people understand Fukushima correctly, we will flawlessly send information on mid-space levels of radiation and radiation levels of agricultural and marine products. We will inspect all bags of rice and ensure product control from transplanting of rice seedlings through harvesting, and we will provide consumers with information on the traceability of rice in an easy to understand manner. We will do our best, and we will make only safe rice available to consumers.

Q: Talks on building a temporary storage facility for contaminated soil have stalled so far. What are you going to do about this?

A: I believe a temporary storage facility will play an important role in efforts to decontaminate. But we have to handle it while fully listening to the opinions of local municipalities concerned.

Q: Is there anything you want the central government to do?

A: Long and tenacious efforts are needed to complete restoration from the nuclear disaster. I want the central government to deal with it with on-the-spot sensitivity and enact a bill on Special Measures for Fukushima Reconstruction and Revitalization, which is vital for the reconstruction of Fukushima. In order to prevent people from forgetting the nuclear disaster and to have the general public and government officials concerned share awareness about the disaster with us, I think it is important for Fukushima Prefecture to dispatch information and have these officials visit Fukushima.

Edvard Munch : "The scream" and nukes

March 8, 2012

Can 'The Scream' painting warn future generations of radioactive waste risks?

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/perspectives/news/20120308p2a00m0na001000c.html>

Norwegian painter Edvard Munch's "The Scream," which depicts a man covering his ears and opening his mouth against the backdrop of the red sky, is so impressive that those who see the work once will never forget it. The artist drew four pictures with the same composition.

Sotheby's has announced that it will auction off one of the works in May. Since the painting is so well known to the world, rumors that the successful bid will be over 6 billion yen should not be dismissed.

One of the four paintings was stolen from a museum in 2004. Even though it was subsequently recovered, how the work was stolen is shrouded in mystery.

"The Scream" reminds many people of "Into Eternity," a documentary film whose Japanese title is "Jumannen-go-no Anzen" (Safety 100,000 years later). The work depicts the Onkalo final disposal site for spent nuclear fuel from nuclear power plants, which is under construction on the island of Olkiluoto, Finland. It is a repository to be built in solid bedrock by digging an underground tunnel.

The biggest problem is that it will take 100,000 years before radioactive waste becomes harmless. Homo Neanderthalensis still existed 100,000 years ago, and mysterious dwarfs reportedly inhabited Indonesia more than 10,000 years ago. Many people wonder how to inform future human species of the risks that Onkalo will pose. It was subsequently proposed to use Munch's "The Scream" to that end.



This photo provided by Sotheby's shows "The Scream" by Norwegian painter Edvard Munch.(AP Photo/Sotheby's)

However, one cannot help but wonder whether the work can really warn future species, who may not understand our languages, of the danger.

The Japanese government is now holding a debate on how to deal with spent nuclear fuel, with particular attention focused on what to do with a nuclear fuel recycling project that it has promoted as part of its key energy policy.

However, radioactive waste will remain regardless of whether it is reprocessed or not. In other words, Japan has no choice but to build a final disposal site for such toxic waste.

How can we inform mankind some 100,000 years into the future of the existence of radioactive waste? Discussions on the issue have yet to begin while we are aware of risks posed by radiation that leaked from the tsunami-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. ("Yoroku," a front-page column in the Mainichi Shimbun)

[Click here for the original Japanese story](#)

Less nukes

March 9, 2012

Japan should decrease dependence on nuclear power instead of trying to reactivate reactors

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/perspectives/news/20120309p2a00m0na002000c.html>

The government's pledge to decrease Japan's reliance on nuclear power plants following the outbreak of the disaster at the tsunami-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant is hardly mentioned in today's political world.

In his policy speech at the outset of the ongoing Diet session, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, who appears to be preoccupied with raising the 5 percent consumption tax, did not show strong enthusiasm for decreasing Japan's dependence on nuclear plants.

This is despite the fact that following the outbreak of the nuclear disaster, then Prime Minister Naoto Kan declared that he would seek to decrease Japan's reliance on nuclear power and Noda has promised to take over that policy.

An opinion poll that the Mainichi Shimbun has conducted shows that over 70 percent of the public are in favor of relying less on nuclear power. Therefore, the government has a responsibility to show specific ways to achieve this goal, such as the development of alternative energy sources.

Another survey that the Mainichi conducted on the mayors of municipalities situated within 30 kilometers from the crippled nuclear plant in February has produced interesting results. Over half -- or 57 percent -- of the mayors surveyed support the resumption of operations at nuclear power stations stopped for regular inspections with some conditions attached.

Still, 76 percent of them said they are in favor of less reliance on nuclear energy. Even the mayors of some municipalities that host nuclear plants and have received subsidies from the national government in return called for a decrease in the country's dependence on nuclear plants.

One of them, Hideo Kishimoto, mayor of the Saga Prefecture town of Genkai, which hosts Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Genkai Nuclear Power Plant, said in the survey, "Japan should decrease its reliance on nuclear power while going ahead with the technological development of renewable energy."

A total of 60 percent of the people surveyed by the Mainichi in September 2011 said that the number of nuclear power stations should be decreased on a step-by-step basis over a long period of time. The figure rises to 72 percent if those who call for an early suspension of operations at nuclear plants are included. A majority of the Japanese public share the hope that nuclear plants should be decreased in the long run.

Until the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear crisis in March last year, I had believed, as a journalist who had covered issues relating to nuclear energy for many years, that nuclear power stations were indispensable for Japan, which is poor in natural resources.

I coolly responded when Germany shifted its policy toward getting rid of nuclear power plants in the late 1990s, believing that "it is possible because European countries can buy power from neighboring countries when they are short of power." Above all, I did not think that a catastrophic accident would ever happen at any nuclear power station in Japan.

However, my thoughts changed drastically as I observed irreparable damage to the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant and local communities through my coverage of the ongoing crisis.

Nuclear power should be deemed as faulty technology as two extremely serious accidents occurred -- one at Chernobyl in 1986 and the other at Fukushima in 2011 -- and devastated local communities less than about a half century since nuclear plants were first put into commercial use.

Aging and dangerous reactors should be shut down first, and then all Japan's nuclear plants should be abolished in the long run.

However, as many mayors pointed out in the Mainichi survey last month, it is indispensable to secure substitute energy sources to make up for a decrease in Japan's reliance on nuclear power. A shortage of electric power is a serious blow particularly to the socially vulnerable.

Following the outbreak of the crisis, escalators at railway stations and traffic lights stopped in the Tokyo metropolitan area because of efforts to save electric power consumption and rolling power blackouts occurred, causing trouble to the elderly and physically handicapped. If companies are forced to downsize their operations due to power shortages, non-regular workers will be the first to lose their jobs.

The government, which has pledged to reduce Japan's reliance on nuclear power, should shift its energy policy toward developing renewable energy and energy-saving technologies. Moreover, it should clearly show how many years it will take before all nuclear plants are decommissioned as well as how electric power can be secured and what kind of lifestyles members of the public should adopt until that goal is achieved.

However, the government appears to be hastily trying to reactivate nuclear reactors that have been suspended for regular inspections.

Currently, only two nuclear reactors are in operation in Japan, and all the nation's 54 reactors will have been stopped by as early as mid-May if none of those suspended for regular inspections are reactivated. As a precondition for resuming operations at nuclear reactors, the government demands that safety evaluations clearly show how far they can withstand larger than anticipated earthquakes and tsunami.

The government appears desperate. "Unless nuclear reactors are reactivated, it'll be inevitable that electric power charges will rise drastically," warns Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yukio Edano.

Professor Hitoshi Yoshioka, vice president of Kyushu University who is an expert in nuclear power policy, says, "It's only natural that a majority of the members of the public are in favor of decreasing the country's reliance on nuclear energy for electricity supply, considering the massive damage caused by the nuclear crisis to Fukushima. Regardless of what kind of policy the government adopts, no progress can be made on any policy based on the promotion of nuclear power."

Tatsuya Murakami, mayor of the Ibaraki Prefecture village of Tokai that hosts many nuclear facilities including a nuclear power plant, criticized the government and the power industry for lacking a sense of responsibility for the nuclear disaster.

"The Fukushima nuclear crisis is deep-rooted in Japan's distorted energy policy. The government and the nuclear industry do not appear to feel a sense of responsibility toward those who have lost their hometowns to the crisis," Murakami said in response to the Mainichi survey.

The government will adopt its new energy policy at the Energy and Environment Council comprised of Cabinet ministers concerned by this coming summer. One cannot help but wonder how the prime minister will respond to these opinions voiced by communities that host nuclear power stations, as well as members of the general public. The government's attempt to hastily reactivate nuclear reactors without clearly showing a path toward decreasing Japan's reliance on nuclear power stations runs counter to the will of the public. ("As I see it" by Taku Nishikawa, Tokyo Science and Environment News Department)

Renewable energy for Fukushima

March 11, 2012

ONE YEAR AFTER THE DISASTER / New energy in Fukushima / Projects under way to replace mainstay of N-power generation

The Yomiuri Shimbun

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120310003793.htm>

Plans are under way to build electric power plants in Fukushima Prefecture that draw on new energy resources, to replace the nuclear power generation that has supported the regional economy.

In Minami-Soma, Fukushima Prefecture, efforts are under way to build a solar power plant in rice paddies. The project is led by Eiju Hangai, a native of the city and a former employee of Tokyo Electric Power Co.

"I caused trouble for my home prefecture. I want to transform the Hamadori region into a place of renewable energy sources," Hangai said.

Hangai, 58, was an executive officer at TEPCO, in charge of such operations as refurbishing condominiums and nursing care services. He left the company in June 2010.

His parents' home is inside the no-entry zone around TEPCO's crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, and his 78-year-old mother, Kumi, now lives with his younger sister in Tokyo.

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, Hangai drove a two-ton truck from his home in Tokyo and transported aid goods, such as winter clothes, to a gym in Minami-Soma.

At the gym, a female evacuee told him with an icy gaze: "TEPCO did a terrible thing. I worry about the future of children here."

With mixed feelings of being both a victim and also a perpetrator, Hangai established the Fukushima Fukko Solar company in September. It plans to set up solar power generation panels with output capacity of 500 kilowatts and sell the electric power to Tohoku Electric Power Co. and other firms.

The company is likely to secure 200 million yen through other companies' financial cooperation and government subsidies, and plans to start operations in spring next year.

There is also a plan to build huge wind power generators in the sea several kilometers off the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

University of Tokyo Prof. Takeshi Ishihara is conducting a study with 10 Japanese and foreign companies, including Marubeni Corp., the university and the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry, in a joint project by the public sector, private companies and academic circles.

The plan calls for setting up wind turbines that are 200 meters tall--as tall as skyscrapers--on shiplike floating bases at sea. The floating bases will be anchored to the seabed.

Participants plan to build about 140 of the power generators and produce a total of 1 million kilowatts--equivalent to that of a nuclear reactor--by about fiscal 2020.

If realized, it is estimated the project and related works, such as the production of parts, will create about 5,000 jobs.

Use of new energy resources is also expected to resolve the problem of the massive amount of debris that together with the nuclear disaster has hindered reconstruction work.

Makoto Suzuki, 51, runs a biomass power generation plant in Murayama, Yamagata Prefecture. He has accepted wooden debris from the disaster-struck Sanriku region and used it to fuel power generation since July.

For fuel, biomass power generation uses wood, leftover agricultural products, livestock excretions and other materials stemming from animals, or gas made from these materials.

Wooden biomass can effectively utilize timber from forest thinning and scrap wood, and the resources can be recycled repeatedly by growing new plants.

Usually, the plant uses branches cut from cheery trees during harvesting as fuel.

Suzuki visited a sports ground in Kesennuma, Miyagi Prefecture, a month after the disaster and saw piles of debris there about 10 meters high. The debris contained scrap wood from destroyed houses, metal, vinyl, and stone. He felt it would be impossible for the afflicted communities to dispose of all of the debris on their own.

Burning the debris in the power generators carries the risk of radioactive substances.

Suzuki has measured radiation levels each time he burns debris. He and the Murayama city government cooperated in explaining to local residents that the radiation levels of the debris were not higher than those in wood collected inside Yamagata Prefecture.

After explaining repeatedly, Suzuki finally was able to use the debris as fuel.

"I'll continue to accept [debris] until the disaster-hit areas are cleared," he said.

Unlike nuclear power generation, it is difficult for new energy resources to cover most electricity demand. But various attempts are under way in many disaster-hit locations, aimed at creating industries and jobs.

A new clean Fukushima

March 12, 2012

Fukushima issues declaration to promote renewable energy

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/03/12/20120312p2g00m0dm068000c.html>

FUKUSHIMA (Kyodo) -- On the first anniversary of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami that triggered the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, the governor of Fukushima Prefecture on Sunday called for terminating nuclear power and promoting the use of renewable energy.

"Fukushima aims to create a society that enjoys sustainable development by promoting renewable energy and not depending on nuclear power," read the "Fukushima Declaration," unveiled by Fukushima Gov. Yuhei Sato at a symposium in Fukushima city concerning the revival of the prefecture from the March disasters.

"We will call for all nuclear power stations in the prefecture to be shut down so that an accident like this never happens again," said the declaration signed by Sato, referring to the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

The symposium was held following a ceremony organized by the prefectural government to mark one year since the disasters. To spread the message to the world, an English version of the declaration was posted on the prefecture's official website.

"We will create once again a beautiful Fukushima. We will build a dynamic and vibrant Fukushima. We will show the world and pass down to future generations Fukushima's revitalization process," it said.

Anti-nukes demonstrations in Japan too

March 12, 2012

Antinuclear protests held across Japan on anniversary of disaster

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120312p2g00m0dm069000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Antinuclear protesters took to the streets in Tokyo and elsewhere in Japan on Sunday, the one-year anniversary of the massive earthquake and tsunami which triggered the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

Near the head office of Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the crippled Fukushima complex, demonstrators called for the country to abandon nuclear power generation and restore Fukushima Prefecture, where more than 100,000 residents were forced to relocate.

Some 16,000 people attended an antinuclear gathering in the city of Koriyama in Fukushima and rallied in the city, calling for scrapping all nuclear reactors in Japan. The country has 54 commercial nuclear reactors, which provided a third of Japan's electric power prior to the Fukushima plant disaster.

In Shizuoka Prefecture in central Japan, about 1,100 people gathered to call for scrapping Chubu Electric Power Co.'s nuclear reactors at its Hamaoka power plant. Those reactors were halted last May after then prime minister Naoto Kan asked the utility to suspend their operation due to concern about a powerful quake in that area of Shizuoka Prefecture.

About 1,200 people including members of antinuclear citizens' groups marched in the city of Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, which hosts the prototype fast-breeder reactor Monju and Kansai Electric Power Co.'s nuclear reactors.

They voiced objection to restarting two of the reactors at Kansai Electric's Oi power plant in the prefecture after the country's nuclear safety agency approved results of safety tests conducted on the reactors idled for a regular checkup and left a final decision on whether to restart them to the government of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.

"What we need to do, after witnessing how tragic Tokyo Electric's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant accident is, is to build a society which does not rely on nuclear plants," said Fujio Yamamoto, who leads a group which organized the protest.

Similar protests were also held in other prefectures which host nuclear power plants or related facilities, including Saga and Aomori.

In the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, atomic bomb survivors took part in antinuclear protests and urged the country to stop relying on nuclear power.

Tsuruga no.1 reactor is 42

March 14, 2012

Japan's oldest reactor marks 42nd anniv., resumption unforeseen

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120314p2g00m0dm017000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Japan's oldest commercial nuclear reactor reached its 42nd anniversary Wednesday, at a time when the government has proposed limiting the service life of nuclear reactors at 40 years in the wake of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima complex.

The No. 1 reactor of the Tsuruga nuclear plant in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, operated by Japan Atomic Power Co., commenced its operational life on March 14, 1970, to distribute electricity mainly to western Japan, including the Kansai area surrounding Osaka.

While it has been idled since Jan. 26 last year for a 14-month regular checkup, it remains unclear when, or if, it will be reactivated in the face of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant and the government's proposed 40-year limit.

Moreover, an active fault was detected under the premises of the Tsuruga plant, stirring concerns of a magnitude 7.4-level earthquake.

Tsuruga Mayor Kazuharu Kawase indicated the reactor should be reactivated once its safety is confirmed, arguing the government's 40-year proposal "is logically invalid."

Opposing this view, Tetsuen Nakajima, an antinuclear activist in Fukui, said, "It remains unclear how the aging affected the troubled reactors at the Fukushima complex. Degraded reactors should be decommissioned in succession before they cause catastrophic situations."

In Fukui Prefecture, the No. 2 reactor at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Mihama nuclear plant will turn 40 in July and its No. 1 reactor will have been operated for 42 years in November.

Another five reactors in the prefecture have already been operated for more than 30 years.
(Mainichi Japan) March 14, 2012

Older nuclear plants pose safety challenge: IAEA

By Fredrik Dahl

VIENNA | Tue Mar 13, 2012 6:48am EDT - <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/13/us-nuclear-safety-iaea-idUSBRE82C0IQ20120313>

(Reuters) - Eighty percent of the world's nuclear power plants are more than 20 years old, raising safety concerns, a draft U.N. report says a year after Japan's Fukushima disaster.

Many operators have begun programs, or expressed their intention, to run reactors beyond their planned design lifetimes, said the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) document which has not yet been made public.

"There are growing expectations that older nuclear reactors should meet enhanced safety objectives, closer to that of recent or future reactor designs," the Vienna-based U.N. agency's annual Nuclear Safety Review said.

"There is a concern about the ability of the ageing nuclear fleet to fulfill these expectations."

The Fukushima tragedy was triggered on March 11, 2011, when an earthquake unleashed a tsunami that left 19,000 people dead or missing. It also smashed into the coastal power plant causing a series of catastrophic failures at the facility.

Images of the stricken plant shook public confidence in nuclear power and forced the nuclear industry to launch a campaign to defend its safety record.

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano told Reuters last week that nuclear power is now safer than it was a year ago. The report said the "operational level of NPP (nuclear power plant) safety around the world remains high".

It cited steady improvements in terms of unplanned reactor shutdowns in recent years.

But the 56-page IAEA document also highlighted an ageing nuclear fleet, with eighty percent of the 435 facilities more than two decades old at the end of last year.

This "could impact safety and their ability to meet member states' energy requirements in an economical and efficient manner", said the report, which has been submitted to IAEA member states but not yet finalized.

Operators and regulators opting for so-called long term operation "must thoroughly analyze the safety aspects related to the ageing of 'irreplaceable' key components", it added.

LESSONS LEARNT?

About 70 percent of the world's 254 research reactors have been in operation for more than 30 years "with many of them exceeding their original design life," it said.

The document was debated by the IAEA's 35-nation governing board last week, almost exactly a year after the world's worst nuclear accident in 25 years.

Last year's tsunami overwhelmed Fukushima on Japan's northeast coast, knocking out critical power supplies that resulted in a nuclear meltdown and the release of radiation.

The reactors were stabilized by December, but high radiation levels hamper a cleanup that is expected to take decades.

The crisis sparked a rethink about nuclear power and countries such as Germany, Italy and Switzerland have decided to phase out their reactors.

But other states, for example fast-growing China and India, continue to look to nuclear energy to meet their growing energy needs, the IAEA report said, adding that some "are even accelerating their nuclear energy programs".

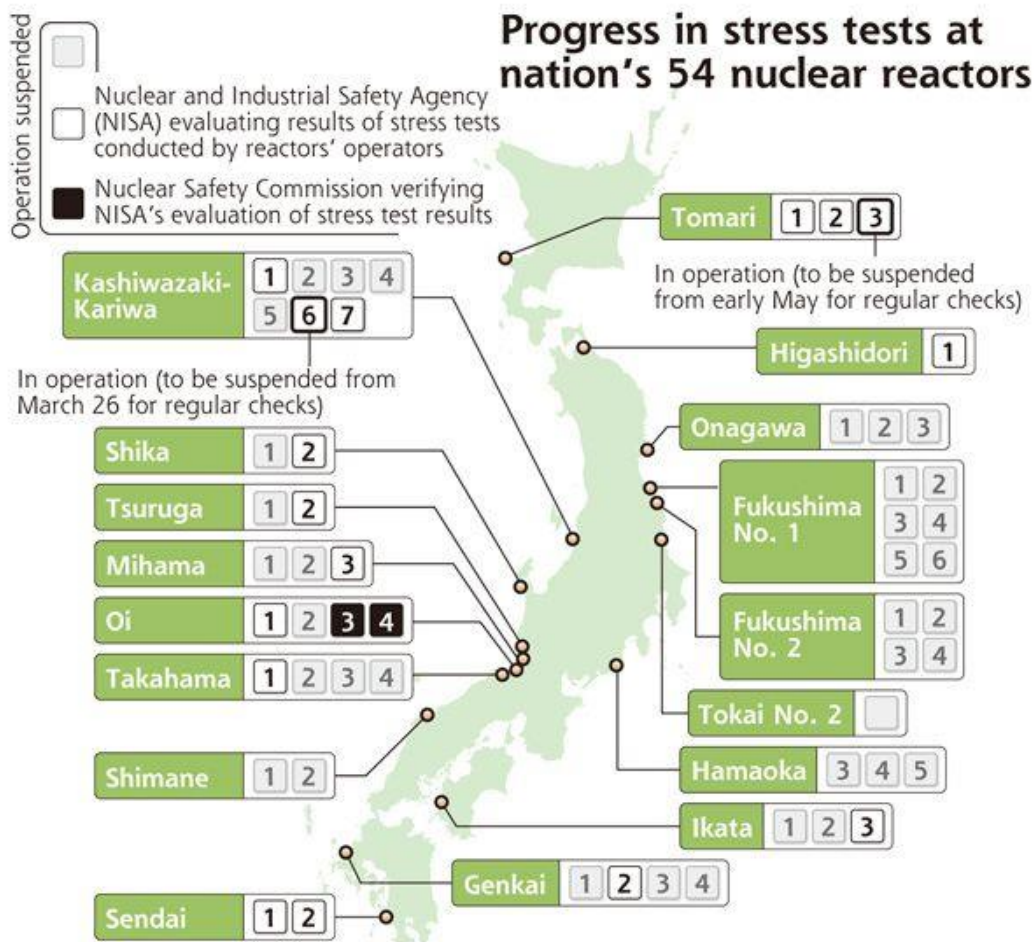
France is building its first "advanced" reactor and Russia is seeking to double its nuclear energy output by 2020, it said.

"All countries that are using nuclear power are much more serious about nuclear safety," Amano said last week. But environmental group Greenpeace said no "real lessons" appeared to have been learnt from Fukushima.

Still waiting to decide

Akiyoshi Hatamoto and Noriko Hara / Yomiuri Shimbun Staff Writers

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120314006042.htm>



Local governments and residents who rely on income tied to the operation of Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant are hoping that the central government will formally request that the plant restart reactors Nos. 3 and 4, despite lingering safety concerns.

"My true feeling is that I want their [the reactors'] safety to be confirmed and for them to get restarted," said a member of the Oi town assembly in Fukui Prefecture.

There are four reactors--Oi Nos. 1 to 4--in the town. For many of the 8,800 town residents, the plant is closely linked to their daily lives. One resident said, "Most of us have a family member or a relative who has a job related to the operation of the nuclear plant."

Plant-related revenues, including the fixed assets tax, come to 6.3 billion yen, which accounts for **60 percent of the town government's general budget** of 10.8 billion yen for fiscal 2012.

According to the Hello Work Obama, in Obama, which has the town of Oi under its jurisdiction, there were 284 new job offers in January, down 29 percent from a year earlier. This shows the impact that the protracted suspension of the plant is having.

This situation is similar across much of Fukui Prefecture, which hosts 13 reactors --the largest number of any prefecture.

In a prefectural government survey of 168 companies in Fukui about the effects of the reactors' suspension, 45 percent said they were "already affected" by the closures, and another 45 percent said they will be "affected in the future."

But local governments and residents are concerned that they will be criticized for prioritizing economic benefits over safety concerns if they become the first to call for the plant's reopening.

In July, then Prime Minister Naoto Kan overruled Hideo Kishimoto, the town head of Genkai, Saga Prefecture, who had approved the resumption of operations of Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Genkai nuclear power plant. The central government's order to perform stress tests on the plant instead of restarting it was probably in the thoughts of local governments that host nuclear plants.

Oi Mayor Shinobu Tokioka has been calling for the central government to clarify the state's responsibility. If Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and three ministers concerned decide that nuclear power is necessary, Tokioka wants them to explain the need of nuclear power to his local government and residents.

The Cabinet Office's Nuclear Safety Commission has effectively given the go-ahead for the reopening of the Oi reactors, which means the local government and residents are eagerly awaiting a decision by Noda and the ministers, as well as their explanations to the public.

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Mixed sentiment

Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata No. 3 nuclear reactor is likely to be the next plant to resume operation, if the Oi plant gets the green light.

The Aichi prefectural branch of UI Zensen--the Japanese Federation of Textile, Chemical, Food, Commercial, Service and General Workers' Unions--asked Ehime Gov. Tokihiro Nakamura last December to prevent the three reactors at the Ikata plant from going offline at the same time.

But the reactors stopped operating in January, raising concerns that the job situation will worsen.

"Considering concern over possible power shortages this summer, we are calling on the government to ensure the reactors resume operation as soon as they pass government procedures," said Yoshihiko Takemori, chief of the Ehime prefectural branch.

Only two of the nation's 54 nuclear reactors--Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa No. 6 reactor and Hokkaido Electric Power Co.'s Tomari No. 3 reactor--are still operating. The sentiment among nearby residents and the local governments hosting the two reactors is mixed.

"We cannot judge the plant's safety unless there is clarity on the causes of the accidents at Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant," said Niigata Gov. Hirohiko Izumida, whose prefecture hosts the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant.

Last month, while TEPCO President Toshio Nishizawa was visiting the area, the village head of Kariwa, Hiroo Shinada, requested that the utility returns to the principle of "generating electricity only on the basis of assured safety."

For Tomari, Hokkaido, nuclear plant-related tax revenues accounts for 97 percent of its initial budget for fiscal 2011. Tomari Mayor Hiroomi Makino wants the two suspended reactors at the plant to be reopened, and told a village assembly session on Monday, "We want the resumption of operations at the reactors if they are [confirmed] safe on the basis of the guidelines and standards of the central government."

Pressure to restart

March 15, 2012

Approval seen for Oi nuclear plant test results

The Yomiuri Shimbun

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120314006627.htm>

Process to restart Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at KEPCO's Oi nuclear power plant



The Cabinet Office's Nuclear Safety Commission is expected to approve documents on the first-stage stress tests on the safety of nuclear reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant as early as next week.

The commission completed examining the documents, which the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) had earlier judged proper, on Tuesday.

Haruki Madarame, chairman of the commission, said, "There were no problems in the way [the agency has] examined the documents" of the first-stage stress tests on the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at the Kansai Electric Power Co. plant in Fukui Prefecture.

In response, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and three relevant Cabinet ministers will meet by the end of this month to judge whether the nuclear reactors should be reactivated. If they agree on reactivating the reactors, the government will offer explanations to relevant local governments and residents.

One year after the start of the crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the issue of whether idled nuclear reactors will be reactivated has entered a new phase.

The verification of the first-stage stress test results was part of procedures for reactivating idled nuclear reactors under a policy the government presented in July last year.

In checking NISA's examination documents, the Nuclear Safety Commission's panel of experts conducted hearings at which it heard from representatives of NISA and KEPCO.

After the panel's fifth meeting Tuesday, Madarame said, "The panel has finished hearings on NISA, so it's time to compile a conclusion by the panel's five members."

Madarame reiterated his long-held view that the safety evaluation was insufficient even though he said he would approve the first-stage results.

"We'll comprehensively make a decision on [nuclear reactor] safety based on results of both first- and second-stage stress test results," he said.

Therefore, the commission plans to ask regulators to evaluate plans for the measures to be taken if reactor cores are damaged, a point not covered in the first-stage test.

Stress tests are for checking whether nuclear reactors and plants would be safe if struck by an earthquake and tsunami exceeding previously assumed scales.

The tests have two stages. The first-stage tests, which cover reactors idled for regular inspections, examine how much they can withstand before the cores of the reactors would be damaged.

The second-stage tests are to cover all nuclear reactors and examine them comprehensively, including measures to be taken after the tests.

Concerning the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors of the Oi plant, NISA checked KEPCO's first-stage test results evaluation and concluded Feb. 8 that an accident similar to that at the Fukushima plant would not occur even if a tsunami of the same scale hit the plant.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has approved NISA's screening method.

The Fukui prefectural government has demanded the government set tentative safety standards based on the lessons from the nuclear accident in addition to the stress tests.

On Feb. 16, NISA drew up a 30-point set of safety measures, including multiple sources of emergency electrical power and the installation of vents with filters to reduce pressure inside nuclear reactors' containment vessels.

The government will expedite efforts to devise new safety standards based on the NISA proposal and offer explanations to local governments and residents.

Will the "antinuclear winds" be strong enough ?

March 15, 2012

The future of nuclear industry-dependent towns is now

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/perspectives/news/20120315p2a00m0na011000c.html>

There are 14 nuclear reactors on the shores of Wakasa Bay in Fukui Prefecture, the largest concentration in the country. Until Feb. 21, when the last of the 14 reactors still running was shut down for regular maintenance, this clutch of reactors supplied half the electricity used by the entire Kansai region.

Across Japan, the anti-nuclear winds are blowing strong. In the areas around the plants themselves, however, there are equally vehement voices calling for the continuation of nuclear power. Meanwhile, anti-nuclear citizens' groups near the power stations have begun to hunt for a "realistic route" to a post-nuclear power economy in their communities.

However, if we see the pro-nuclear faction as simple "nuclear money" addicts, hungry for the jobs and subsidies that come with hosting a plant, then all useful discussion on the issue comes to a grinding halt.

I was dispatched to the Wakasa Bay area in late March 2011, soon after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami and the ensuing meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. What I want people to understand about this debate is that, behind local calls for nuclear power's continuation are deep misgivings over the future of the community. In fact, it is hard for many of these people to see any future at all.

Some 10 kilometers from the center of Mihama, Fukui Prefecture, and 1 kilometer from Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Mihama nuclear plant, is the district of Takenami, home to a cluster of guest houses frequented mostly by plant workers. When I first visited the area, I was taken aback by how close the Miyama plant's three reactors were, their looming bulk weighing down the landscape between the homes and the sea.

"Nuclear workers come and stay at the guest houses, and young people were employed by the power company," says one 75-year-old local farmer. "This place used to be a backwater, but thanks to the nuclear plant it really developed."

Until I took up my position in Fukui Prefecture, I had always seen communities around power stations as just getting fat off nuclear money. Certainly, the nuclear subsidies for Mihama have made an enormous difference to the town's finances, perhaps best represented by its new, 2.7 billion yen town hall.

Mihama's Takenami district, however, does not look like it has seen much of that supposed river of nuclear cash. The two-lane prefectural road linking the district to the center of town is often cut by landslides. The community center designated a temporary shelter in case of a nuclear accident is the district's only reinforced concrete building, but it is beginning to show its age, and has also never been earthquake-proofed. Many of the locals are elderly, and the district looks no different than any other sparsely populated rural area. The population of Mihama as a whole has dropped by about 20 percent over the last 40 years.

So, has the nuclear plant actually helped Mihama develop?

"It's true the population has fallen," says the 75-year-old farmer. "So I have to admit I've wondered whether the plant really gave us explosive advantages."

In January this year, the central government laid down a 40-year maximum service life for nuclear reactors. If this limit is strictly applied, the Mihama plant's three reactors will all be shuttered within five years. For a town benefiting so much from nuclear industry-related subsidies and employment, this would mean a complete shift in the very nature of Mihama's existence. However, the town has yet to stir itself in search of an alternative future, and local calls for the continuation of nuclear power roll on unchanged.

At a January meeting between local residents and Kansai Electric representatives, Mihama residents expressed mixed feelings about nuclear power in the wake of the Fukushima meltdowns.

"We're worried about nuclear energy, but at the same time we're worried about losing it," some said. The Fukushima nuclear disaster spread radioactive materials far and wide, contaminating fields and doing severe damage to the agricultural sector. The farming representative in the local delegation expressed deep misgivings over the dangers of nuclear power, but at the same time, "Mihama's farms earn very little income, and about 30 percent of farming family members work at the plants. So we hope very much that the reactors will go back on-line," he said.

Currently, petitions against nuclear energy are proliferating across Japan's urban centers, and millions of signatures have been collected so far. Anti-nuclear activism in local areas, however, has been much weaker. When I asked people in around Mihama about the issue, many told me that "nuclear power is scary, but I have family and neighbors working in nuclear-related jobs, so it's difficult for me to say I'm for abandoning nuclear energy."

The No. 1 reactor at the Mihama plant is just over 40 years old, and in that time nuclear power has become deeply entwined with the lives and livelihoods of the townspeople. Even if Japan gives up on nuclear power generation, neither the plant buildings themselves nor the locals' connections to the industry will disappear overnight. Then there is all that spent nuclear fuel still stored at the facilities. The gap in sentiment about nuclear power between cities and the countryside is growing ever wider.

Teruyuki Matsushita, 63, head of the local anti-nuclear group "Mori to kurasu donguri club," has begun a serious look at what route the town might take if nuclear power came to an end. He is in consultation with experts on initiatives to connect local employment with keeping spent nuclear fuel in the town for the next 20 to 30 years, without expanding nuclear facilities. He plans to have proposals ready for submission to the mayor by May this year.

For Matsushita, who has been pointing out the dangers of nuclear power for many years, this was a bitter choice to make, and he has taken plenty of flak from other anti-nuclear activists for moving in this direction. However, "what will happen to the town if nuclear power just disappears," he says. "If we propose a concrete and realistic policy for alternatives to the nuclear industry, we should be able to ease the region into something different."

We can all see the dangers of nuclear power clearly now, after the Fukushima meltdowns. This year, Japan will engage in a national debate over the next step to be taken in the country's decades-long dance with nuclear energy. A concrete vision of the future of local areas now dependent on nuclear power must be a part of that debate. If we can hammer out that vision, then we can deal with the needs of both sides of the issue -- the local areas hosting nuclear plants and the electricity-consuming urban areas that were the *raison d'être* for the plants themselves -- in the same arena. If we can do that, then surely the debate on Japan's energy future will get that much easier. (By Mirai Nagira, Tsuruga correspondent)

Click here for the original Japanese story

Listen to the people ?

March 19, 2012

Local govts have duty to air residents' wishes

Takaaki Suzuki / Yomiuri Shimbun Staff Writer

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120318002709.html>

Local governments grappling with the issue of whether to resume idled nuclear reactors are in a bind. Many municipalities had been expecting the central government to show leadership in deciding on the merits--or otherwise--of restarting nuclear reactors. But until recently, it was unclear whether the central government would decide to restart suspended reactors prior to gaining the consent of local governments concerned.

While local governments have the most to gain--or lose--from nuclear plants, they also have a responsibility to convey the feelings of their residents to powers higher up the chain.

However, the government indicated this month that it would make a final decision on reactivating the No. 3 and 4 reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture after Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and three relevant Cabinet ministers make a political decision and gain understanding from local governments and residents.

Putting the onus on local governments to approve the restart of reactors is a huge burden. Any nuclear accident could have an impact on an area far wider than the municipality hosting a reactor--as the crisis that started at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in March last year made clear.

In a survey on this issue, many local governments shared their concerns.

"At a time when a mountain of problems need to be resolved, a local government can't make a decision unless the central government has made its decision," the Matsue municipal government in Shimane Prefecture said.

The central government is expected in the weeks and months ahead to fully explain to local governments that host nuclear plants that the reactors are safe to restart, and gain their approval for the resumption of operations by dispelling the concerns of local residents.

But it is local governments that suffer the heaviest damage when a serious accident happens at a nuclear plant. They are also the ones that would benefit the most economically from restarting a nuclear plant, as subsidies from the central government pour in and jobs are created.

It has become clear that the central government bears responsibility for reopening nuclear plants. However, it is still local government leaders who are responsible for protecting local residents and conveying their wishes to the central government and power companies.

Maximum 30% nukes in future ?

March 21, 2012

Govt eyes up to 30% future ratio of N-power

The Yomiuri Shimbun

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120320004195.htm>

The government is likely to set nuclear power contributions to the nation's energy supply in 2030 at a maximum of 30 percent under a new basic plan on energy, according to sources.

It will be a significant drop from the figure set under the current energy plan, which calls for nuclear power to account for a majority of the nation's total energy.

Particularly since the outbreak of the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, public attention has been directed at the government's new basic plan as it will set the tone of national energy policy.

The Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry's research committee for natural resources and energy intends to draw up several scenarios on the ratios of energy sources by the end of April and select one this summer, the sources said.

The panel on Monday came up with four plans, each of which proposes different ratios of nuclear power in 2030--0 percent, 20 percent, 25 percent and 30 percent. The panel will compile a formal proposal after incorporating variables such as electricity demand and possible effects of energy conservation.

According to the sources, only one panel member called for nuclear power to account for about 30 percent of the nation's total power supply, the same level as before the Fukushima nuclear crisis. Nine panel members were in favor of either about 25 percent or about 20 percent, while seven pushed for the ratio to be 0 percent, supporting the idea that the nation will eventually abandon nuclear power.

The nation is expected to rely more on renewable energy sources and thermal power if it reduces its dependence on nuclear power.

At the meeting, members agreed it would be difficult for the nation to raise nuclear power's share to 50 percent of the total energy supply.

The sources said many ministry officials view 20 percent to 25 percent as realistic. The panel is therefore likely to coordinate opinions around those figures, they added.

However, panel members remain deeply divided, the sources said. They will likely face difficulties reaching an agreement.

Renewable energy sources, which many hope will make up for the decrease in nuclear power, still have technical uncertainty and costs are also at issue.

Higher fuel costs for thermal power generation--which has increased since the Great East Japan Earthquake--are likely to raise electricity rates. Increased thermal power generation will also raise carbon dioxide emissions.

Keeping such issues in mind, the government needs to consider public opinion to choose the best plan for the nation's energy policy.

(Mar. 21, 2012)

Osaka vs KEPCO

March 20, 2012

Osaka stirs ripples with planned anti-nuclear power pitch at KEPCO shareholders meeting

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120321p2a00m0na006000c.html>

A decision by the Osaka Municipal Government, Kansai Electric Power Co.'s biggest shareholder, to suggest abolishing the company's nuclear power plants at a general shareholders meeting in June has stirred ripples.

The municipal government is expected to ask the Kobe and Kyoto municipal governments, which also hold shares in the power company, to follow suit, but individual shareholders, who account for one-third of the company's shares, could also sway the company.

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto has underscored the city's right to make proposals as a shareholder from the time of the Osaka mayoral election last autumn. Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO) President Makoto Yagi has sought dialogue with the city, stating, "I'd like to provide a full explanation to win understanding of our business activities." However, guidelines compiled by the Osaka Municipal Government's energy strategy council on March 18 declared "an end to all nuclear power plants as soon as possible" -- seeking complete abolition of nuclear power. At present KEPCO appears unlikely to comply with requests to eliminate nuclear power.

Commenting on the issue to reporters on March 19, Hashimoto said, "This is not a suggestion to reduce nuclear power plants to zero without any strategy. We will consider the process leading to the time when there are no more nuclear power plants, and make suggestions as a shareholder." He has requested that KEPCO present forecasts for future electricity supply and demand. Since the mayor is not seeking an immediate suspension of nuclear power, it is possible that the two sides could make concessions during further discussion on supply and demand based on such data.

The Osaka Municipal Government holds roughly 8.9 percent of KEPCO's issued shares, followed by the Kobe Municipal government at about 3 percent, and the Kyoto Municipal Government at about 0.5 percent. Referring to the other two cities, Hashimoto said, "I believe that they will move together with us. We were chosen in the elections and we have the voters behind us. We cannot be treated as a mere 13 percent shareholder."

However, KEPCO has many corporate investors, such as financial institutions, which hold a combined 29 percent of KEPCO's stock.

"The decisions of corporate investors are based on economic rationality. Their views regarding nuclear power have not changed due to the nuclear power plant accident (in Fukushima Prefecture)," commented one representative of a major financial institution, suggesting the municipal government's suggestion would not easily win approval.

At the same time, individual shareholders hold about one-third of KEPCO's stock, and in past years, citizens groups have proposed abolishing nuclear power. However, at the general shareholders meeting in June last year, after the outbreak of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, such proposals received only 3.9 percent support.

Nevertheless Koji Morioka, the ombudsman representative of NPO shareholders and a professor in Kansai University's Faculty of Economics, comments: "The weight of a proposal by the biggest shareholder (the Osaka Municipal Government), which holds about 10 percent of the shares, is different. There may be many shareholders who see this as a major flow in one direction and support it."

[Click here for the original Japanese story](#)

A feeling of deja vu

March 20, 2012

Post-Fukushima meltdown energy saving far easier ride than 1970s oil shocks

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/perspectives/news/20120320p2a00m0na001000c.html>

There is a growing number of students at Josai International University majoring in social and environmental studies, and one of the issues they study is energy policy. I tell them that I got my own informal education in energy policy during the "oil shock" years of 1973-74, almost 40 years ago, when I first lived in Tokyo. In fact, when saving electricity was on everyone's mind last summer, it was for me an experience of deja vu.

After the Fukushima nuclear accident, people in Tokyo experienced energy-reducing measures such as stopped escalators, darkened hallways, and less air conditioning in offices and trains. Some of the same measures were taken in 1973, but the impact on life felt even more severe back then. For example, gas stations were closed on Sunday during the oil shock, forcing people to limit their weekend driving. Late-night TV broadcasts were also canceled. Even baseball was affected when night games at Korakuen Stadium were switched to daytime so that no artificial lights were needed. Consumer prices rose dramatically, too. I was paying 48 yen to bathe at the public bath house near my apartment in 1972; the following year I paid 55 yen, an increase of almost 15 percent; and by the time I left Tokyo in 1975, I was paying 100 yen, more than double the 1972 price!

Due to the dramatic upswing in consumer prices during the oil shock years, people were forced to cut back or simply "do without." Last summer, however, I noticed that the emphasis was on allowing people to maintain their current lifestyle with a minimum of inconvenience. Rather than cut back or do without, this time people were encouraged to purchase energy-saving appliances. The strategy of replacing less energy-efficient models with "green" appliances also benefited the bottom line of manufacturers and thus became a business opportunity for them. From what I could tell, TEPCO's goal wasn't only reduction of total energy consumption but also to shift consumption patterns so that the electrical grid would not be overwhelmed by daytime demand.

Therefore, some electricity-saving measures implemented all over Japan during the oil shock, such as canceling late-night TV or playing baseball night games in the daytime, were unnecessary this time around. We now live in an information society, and last summer up-to-date information about electrical capacity and peak usage was always instantly available in the media. As a result, we could be much smarter about saving energy than we could be during the oil shock years.

In retrospect, I can see that the experience of the oil shocks (there was another in 1979) was probably a major factor that led Japan down the path to nuclear energy. Compared to oil, nuclear power promised safety and reliability and seemed to be the perfect solution to save Japan from unpredictable price increases or reductions in imports.

But the Fukushima accident proved that the safety of nuclear power was not guaranteed, and now Japan is faced with a tough problem: it must find alternative energy sources that will keep the nation running.

Japan is rich and technologically sophisticated, and I have no doubt that in time renewable options such as solar, wind and geothermal power will become widely available and provide a solution to the dilemma. Not just Japan, but the whole world is moving in this direction.

It is reassuring to see young people grappling with the subject of energy policy in their university studies. Their desire for a safer and greener world will be the key to finding a solution, I believe. (By Paul Schalow)

(Profile)

Paul Schalow earned his PhD in Japanese literature from Harvard University in 1985. His book, "A Poetics of Courtly Male Friendship in Heian Japan," was nominated for the 2007 Warren-Brooks Prize for outstanding literary criticism. He is professor at Josai International University and director of the All-English BA Program.

Words of wisdom ?

March 27, 2012

Noda: World should share lessons from Fukushima

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120327_24.html

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has called on leaders from around the world to share and pass on lessons the country learned from last year's catastrophic nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

Noda was speaking during a working lunch at the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, South Korea, on Tuesday.

Noda said Japan learned 3 lessons from the Fukushima accident --- the importance of imagining the unimaginable, of respecting judgments by people on-the-ground, and that security can be achieved only through constant effort.

The prime minister said these lessons can also be applied to terrorist attacks on nuclear facilities.

He said Japan had been shackled by the myth that nuclear plants are absolutely safe. He stressed that **all those who are responsible for nuclear safety measures should be aware there is no such thing as absolute safety.**

Noda said what hampers efforts to prevent accidents is the loss of memory. He said the most difficult, but most important task for leaders is to pass on the memories of disasters.

Anti-nuke Kan

March 29, 2012

Kan, other DPJ members to launch group to seek exit from nuclear power

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120329p2g00m0dm008000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Former Prime Minister Naoto Kan and some other ruling Democratic Party of Japan lawmakers on Wednesday decided to start a group as early as next week that seeks to create a road map for ending the country's reliance on nuclear power.

"Thinking about the future of Japan...why don't we seek a society that does not rely on nuclear power? This group is intended to properly discuss the time frame for realizing that goal," Kan, who was the Japanese leader when the nuclear crisis erupted at the Fukushima Daiichi complex last March, told reporters after a gathering to prepare for the group's launch.

The anti-nuclear activities led by Kan, whose efforts to end Japan's use of nuclear power date back to when he was still in office, come as the government moves closer to a decision on whether to allow the restart of some of the country's idled reactors, despite concerns among the public over their safety.

The reactors have passed safety checks that were newly introduced following the devastating nuclear accident.

Former Justice Minister Hideo Hiraoka, who also joined the gathering, told reporters, "Edging toward restarting reactors is unacceptable to the public."

Kan said he hopes to officially launch the group as early as next week, adding that it will try to make its views reflected in government policy.

Around 25 lawmakers, mainly those close to Kan such as former Justice Minister Satsuki Eda, attended the gathering.

Hosono in trouble in Kyoto

Intense protest against sharing radioactive debris policy in Kyoto

check Iori Mochizuki's site to hear about what happened on March 31 in Kyoto when officials tried to appeal to people's compassion (to get them to share contaminated debris)

<http://fukushima-diary.com/>

Confidence in stress tests not so obvious

April 2, 2012

84 percent say government stress tests for nuclear plant restarts inadequate: survey

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20120402p2a00m0na010000c.html>

Despite the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC) of Japan's conclusion that the idled Oi Nuclear Power Plant clears safety standards required for resuming operations, 84 percent of the public do not believe that the government's safety tests are sufficient, a Mainichi opinion poll has found.

The Mainichi survey was conducted on March 31 and April 1 via phone, using phone numbers that were chosen randomly by computer. Phone numbers in municipalities that have been deemed no-go zones due to the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant were excluded. The response rate was 60 percent, with 905 people responding from 1,499 households with qualified voters.

Of the 905 respondents, 62 percent said they were against resuming operations of the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO)'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, far outnumbering the 33 percent who said they supported the reactors' restart. Meanwhile, only 10 percent considered the NSC's so-called stress tests to be sufficient, while 84 percent said that they were not.

Discussions over a bill that would allow the launch of a new nuclear regulatory agency have stalled in the Diet, postponing its April 1 inauguration date. Because of this, oversight of nuclear power will remain under the jurisdiction of existing government bodies for the time being, even though the public carries a

great distrust toward how government bodies have handled the disaster thus far. Even among survey respondents who said that they agreed with the restart of the two Oi reactors, 67 percent said the government's stress tests were insufficient.

The public's views for and against the restart of the Oi plant vary by region, with those opposing it comprising 75 percent of respondents in Hokkaido; 63 percent in the Kinki region, where the plant is located; and 54 percent in the Koshientsu and Hokuriku regions. Meanwhile, 31 percent of those who support the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) said they are for the restart, while 61 percent said they are against it. Among Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) supporters the split was even, with 47 percent supporting the restart, and 48 percent against it.

On March 23, the NSC ruled that the initial stress test results of the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Oi plant -- whose operations have been halted for regular inspections -- were satisfactory, thereby passing the prerequisite for resuming plant operations. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and the three ministers involved are expected to hold discussions and confirm the reactors' safety, after which they will move into talks with local host communities. The government will make a final decision about the restart after obtaining the communities' consent. The Fukui Prefectural Government and other local governments, however, have shown resistance to the reactors' restart.

[Click here for the original Japanese story](#)

Don't downplay the risks for the sake of economics

April 2, 2012

In light of further nuclear risks, economic growth should not be priority

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/perspectives/news/20120402p2a00m0na002000c.html>

The government continues to take regressive steps in spite of the torrent of criticism it has received and the lessons that should have been learned since the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered a nuclear disaster.

This is evidenced in the fact that starting this week, which marks the beginning of a new fiscal year, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) and the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan (NSC) have no budget. The new nuclear regulatory agency that was supposed to begin operations on April 1 in NISA's stead is now floundering amid resistance in the Diet from opposition parties. In other words, government agencies overseeing nuclear power now have an even more diminished presence.

According to Japan's general budget provisions, funds for a new government organization can be diverted to existing government organizations if the money is being used for its original purpose. The situation doesn't do much for morale, however. Back-scratching relationships between government ministries, the indecision of both the ruling and opposition parties, and the unchanging fact that much of the current crisis is still left in the hands of plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) remains the same.

One of the biggest issues that we face is the possibility that the spent nuclear fuel pool of the No. 4 reactor at the stricken Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant will collapse. This is something that experts from both within and outside Japan have pointed out since the massive quake struck. TEPCO,

meanwhile, says that the situation is under control. However, not only independent experts, but also sources within the government say that it's a grave concern.

The storage pool in the No. 4 reactor building has a total of 1,535 fuel rods, or 460 tons of nuclear fuel, in it. The 7-story building itself has suffered great damage, with the storage pool barely intact on the building's third and fourth floors. The roof has been blown away. If the storage pool breaks and runs dry, the nuclear fuel inside will overheat and explode, causing a massive amount of radioactive substances to spread over a wide area. Both the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and French nuclear energy company Areva have warned about this risk.

A report released in February by the Independent Investigation Commission on the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Accident stated that the storage pool of the plant's No. 4 reactor has clearly been shown to be "the weakest link" in the parallel, chain-reaction crises of the nuclear disaster. The worse-case scenario drawn up by the government includes not only the collapse of the No. 4 reactor pool, but the disintegration of spent fuel rods from all the plant's other reactors. If this were to happen, residents in the Tokyo metropolitan area would be forced to evacuate.

Former Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Sumio Mabuchi, who was appointed to the post of then Prime Minister Naoto Kan's advisor on the nuclear disaster immediately after its outbreak, proposed the injection of concrete from below the No. 4 reactor to the bottom of the storage pool, Chernobyl-style. An inspection of the pool floor, however, led TEPCO to conclude that the pool was strong enough without additional concrete. The plans were scrapped, and antiseismic reinforcements were made to the reactor building instead.

"Because sea water was being pumped into the reactor, the soundness of the structure (concrete corrosion and deterioration) was questionable. There also were doubts about the calculations made on earthquake resistance as well," said one government source familiar with what took place at the time. "It's been suggested that the building would be reinforced, and spent fuel rods would be removed from the pool under those conditions. But fuel rod removal will take three years. Will the structure remain standing for that long? Burying the reactor in a concrete grave is like building a dam, and therefore expensive. I think that it was because TEPCO's general shareholders' meeting was coming up (in June 2011) that the company tried to keep expenses low."

Promotion of nuclear power is a national policy, and yet the operation of nuclear reactors lies in the hands of private corporations. The government pushes the blame on TEPCO, while TEPCO dodges responsibility with the excuse that nuclear energy promotion is a government policy. This system of irresponsibility hasn't changed.

In the three weeks after the Independent Investigation Commission on the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Accident's report became available to the public, 95,000 copies had been sold; this, despite the fact that they run 1,575 yen a piece. It's a testament to the public's thirst for a systematic explanation that is not affected by appearances or interests.

Earthquakes in the neighborhood of level-5 on the seismic intensity scale continue to occur even now in the Tohoku and Kanto regions. We cannot accept the absurd condescension of those who fear the worse-case scenario, labeling them as "overreacting." We have no time to humor the senseless thinking that instead, those who downplay the risks for the sake of economic growth are "realistic." (By Takao Yamada, Expert Senior Writer)

[Click here for the original Japanese story](#)

The story of Shinzo Kimura

Thursday, April 5, 2012

Radiation expert takes on red tape in disaster zone

Kyodo - <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120405f2.html>

Shinzo Kimura, a radiation hygiene expert combating the nuclear contamination in Fukushima, is a man of action who stops at nothing to accomplish his mission.

After watching news footage of the nuclear disaster following the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, Kimura, 44, immediately geared up to go to the accident site.

But his boss at the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health refused to give the green light for his trip to Fukushima, so Kimura quit his job at the government-affiliated institute and scrambled to the disaster area under his own steam.

Kimura says he had no qualms about losing his job.

"I feared that the government could withhold data, deliberately or otherwise. My mission is revealing facts," he explained.

In his new capacity as an associate professor at Dokkyo Medical University, Kimura is acting as adviser to the municipal government of Nihonmatsu, Fukushima Prefecture. He heads the Nihonmatsu branch of the Tochigi Prefecture-based university's international epidemiology laboratory, which opened last November.

As he helps city officials conduct a survey on internal exposure to radiation and advises residents on health issues, Kimura has earned their trust. One municipal official praised Kimura as a man who wastes no time acting to resolve problems.

Kimura collects no fees in return for his work for the municipal government, only accepting travel stipends, as he wants to retain a free hand by remaining financially independent.

"If I'm hooked on a leash, I won't be able to speak my mind," he said.

Kimura's abrupt departure from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health was not his first act of defiance against the straitjacket of red tape.

After studying at Hokkaido University and other academic institutions, he joined the National Institute of Radiological Sciences. He devoted himself to research concerning the health conditions of victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident.

A turning point came in 1999, when a serious accident occurred at the nuclear fuel facility in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture. In that incident, two plant workers were killed.

Kimura immediately requested permission to investigate the accident first-hand, but the go-ahead was not given quickly.

To get a true picture of the accident, it was essential to start investigating before vital evidence, including current radiation readings, was lost.

Kimura took paid leave to go to the accident site and conducted an environmental assessment survey around the damaged plant on his own. It was a frustrating experience, he said.

Subsequently, Kimura left the radiological sciences institute. He continued doing research work on his own while scraping together a living through odd jobs like painting before being employed by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

During his last days at the institute, before going to Fukushima to collect soil and air samples, Kimura contacted several radiation experts who were acquaintances from his earlier career, and requested help in sample analysis.

Toshihiro Takatsuji, an associate professor at Nagasaki University, was one of the experts asked to analyze the huge hoard of samples that Kimura collected. The work done by Takatsuji and others revealed the presence of several hot spots where the level of radioactivity was unusually high despite their remoteness from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

"As day after day of analysis work drained me, I felt as if I was going to break down," Takatsuji recalled.

Kimura obtained his current position at Dokkyo Medical University through his connections with Yoshikazu Miura, a professor at the university who had conducted joint research with him regarding the Chernobyl accident.

Miura remembered Kimura as a "somewhat reckless" man in his earlier days. But Kimura "has matured as a human being," Miura said, as he has gone through the rough and tumble of working on the front line of the fight against radioactive contamination.

Despite his heavy workload, Kimura frequently visits the Shidamyo-Ogi region, one of the hot spots in Iwaki, in southeastern Fukushima Prefecture. He advises residents on how to draw a map of contamination areas and supports efforts to decontaminate farmland.

Chuhei Sakai, the leader of a group of residents promoting decontamination, expressed his gratitude for Kimura's contributions, comparing his nimble activity with the slow wheel of bureaucracy at the municipal government.

For his part, Kimura lauded the residents' initiative in the Shidamyo-Ogi region.

"When I visit disaster areas, I am usually asked to do something to help, and yet nothing changes as long as (local residents) depend on other people," he said. "It is they themselves who should make change happen."

Safety standards?

April 6, 2012

Different views on new safety standards

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120406_35.html

Opinions are divided over new safety standards approved by the Japanese government for nuclear power plants.

Economy and industry minister Yukio Edano told reporters on Friday that the standards were thoroughly discussed by 4 ministers after incorporating opinions from experts. He added they are drawn up in an easy-to-understand manner.

He said the ministers believe that measures based on the standards would prevent damage to reactor fuel rods during a disaster like one on March 11th, 2011 at the Fukushima plant.

The mayor of Ohi Town in Fukui Prefecture, Shinobu Tokioka, expressed confidence in the new standards. Tokioka said he hopes the government will explain the standards in a manner that would convince local residents of the nuclear safety.

The secretary general of the Nuclear Energy Related-Information Centre, Jun Tateno, said the standards have serious flaws.

Tateno said vital measures for the standards with regard to the Ohi plant, such as a raise in the plant's embankment and the construction of an earthquake-resistant building for an emergency headquarters, have been postponed.

Kyoto Governor Keiji Yamada said that before discussing a restart of reactors, the government should fully explain its nuclear policy to residents around every plant, including those in Kyoto. The prefecture is located next to Fukui Prefecture.

Will it make a difference?

April 7, 2012

Japanese mayors to establish anti-nuclear energy conference

"(mainichi Japan) April 07, 2012"

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120407p2g00m0dm043000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Fifteen current and former Japanese mayors have proposed establishing a conference in opposition to nuclear power plants late this month following the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis, one of them said Friday.

"We thought we should set up the conference before Kansai Electric Power Co. restarts its Oi nuclear plant" in Fukui Prefecture, said Hajime Mikami, mayor of Kosai in Shizuoka Prefecture. "By breaking away from nuclear plants, we will protect the lives and property of residents."

They are urging other mayors to join the conference that will discuss the reality of nuclear plants, compile proposals to facilitate the use of renewable energy, and aid in the evacuation of children and the provision of safe food supplies for them through biannual meetings with the goal of eliminating nuclear plants in Japan.

The 15 also include Katsunobu Sakurai, mayor of Fukushima Prefecture's Minamisoma located close to the Fukushima Daiichi plant, which has been crippled since the devastating earthquake and tsunami, and Tatsuya Murakami, mayor of Ibaraki Prefecture's Tokaimura that hosts a nuclear plant of Japan Atomic Power Co.

A total of 55 people including the 15 are expected to participate in an April 28 meeting in Tokyo to inaugurate the conference.

The end of pro-nuclear instruction in schools ?

Ministry wants pro-nuclear power message out of schools

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201203210067>

March 21, 2012

By UMIMASA YOSHIDA / Staff Writer

In light of the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the education ministry wants the plug pulled on pro-nuclear power instruction in Japanese classrooms.

The education ministry has decided to lift the requirement that **at least 30 percent of a school education subsidy, nominally aimed to promote the use of nuclear power, be used on the education of nuclear power instead.**

"The government as a whole used to promote the use of nuclear power until the Fukushima disaster, but there are a diversity of opinions on energy policy now," said Kazuhiko Ikegawa, who heads the education ministry's Office for Regional Relations for R&D Facilities. **"There is a need to learn about the negative aspects of nuclear power generation."**

The "subsidies for assistance to nuclear power and energy education," which was created in fiscal 2002, are derived from revenues from the "tax for the promotion of power resources development," which is levied as part of electricity rates.

In fiscal 2011, 30 prefectures received a total of 270 million yen (\$3.2 million), while 310 million yen will be allocated in fiscal 2012. In most cases, the subsidies have been used to purchase teaching materials on energy sources, including nuclear power.

Starting in fiscal 2012, which begins in April, local governments will be allowed to use most of the subsidies for classroom instruction on solar and other natural energy sources, and less than 30 percent on nuclear power education.

The education ministry has instructed local governments to abide by the 30-percent minimum requirement since 2006, when the finance ministry pointed out that the subsidies "should be focused more on the promotion of support of nuclear energy."

That requirement was never modified even after last March, when the Great East Japan Earthquake triggered the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

A number of local governments in the Tohoku region, hit hard by the Great East Japan Earthquake, have declined the subsidies on the grounds that they would have difficulty gaining the support of residents.

The Asahi Shimbun ran an article on the subsidies on Jan. 22.

On Jan. 24, education minister Hirofumi Hirano issued a directive that "school education should not focus too much on nuclear power but should take up a broad range of subjects related to natural energy sources."

The education ministry will modify the guidelines for the subsidies and make eligible the purchase of teaching materials on the danger of nuclear plants. **Such purchases are not allowed under the current guidelines.**

By UMIMASA YOSHIDA / Staff Writer

Anti-nukes of all countries, unite!

read on April 8, 2012

Japanese join S. Koreans in anti-nuke protests

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201203210051>

March 21, 2012

By AKIRA NAKANO/ Correspondent

YEONGDEOK, South Korea--Japanese protesters joined their South Korean counterparts on March 19 and 20 in demonstrations to protest plans to construct new nuclear power plants at sites near the South Korean coastline facing the Sea of Japan.

"Our seas, mountains and farmlands were contaminated by radioactive materials," said Kenichi Hasegawa, who ran a dairy farm in Iitate, Fukushima Prefecture, before he was forced to evacuate after the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake. "I hope we are the last people who suffer such tragedy."

The protests took place at the two proposed sites: Samcheok in Gangwon province and Yeongdeok in North Gyeongsang province. Both were chosen as candidate sites in December by a public organization that operates nuclear power plants in South Korea.

Hasegawa, 58, said he is now living in a temporary housing facility in Date, Fukushima Prefecture. All the residents of Iitate were required to evacuate because of the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Hasegawa told the South Koreans that he was forced to kill all his dairy cattle and that eight members of his family are now scattered in various locations.

Just "ad-hoc" measures

April 6, 2012

New nuclear safety standards criticized as ad-hoc measures

"(mainichi Japan) April 06, 2012"

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120406p2a00m0na010000c.html>

An outline of the government's new safety standards for resuming idled nuclear reactors has simply listed measures the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) has drawn up in response to the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant.

The outline also suggests that operators of nuclear power plants express readiness to independently implement measures, reflecting the government's veiled objective of restarting idled reactors at an early date.

NISA at the end of March mapped out a 30-point nuclear safety policy which features short-term steps, such as installing vehicle-mounted electricity generators on high ground, and mid-term and long-term measures, like developing multiplexed external power sources.

A proposed nuclear regulatory agency was poised to succeed these safety measures from NISA and write a bill, but stalled Diet deliberations are making it difficult to predict when the planned agency will be established.

The outline calls for power-source facilities inside nuclear power plants, but it remains unclear what kind of facilities power plant operators should prepare and to what extent they should improve their facilities to boost safety. It simply says nuclear power plant operators should find appropriate measures to ensure safety of nuclear power plants.

Baku Nishio, co-director of the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, criticizes the government's new safety standards, saying they are just ad-hoc measures in reaction to the Fukushima nuclear disaster. (By Ei Okada and Hajime Eguchi, Science and Environment News Department, and Momoko Suda, City News Department)

What marks would you like?

April 12, 2012

Yoroku: Marking the government's handling of nuclear reactor assessments

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120412p2a00m0na011000c.html>

It's said that the character Yamaarashi in Soseki Natsume's famous novel "Botchan" was modeled on the late mathematician Aritaka Kumamoto, who served as an instructor at the University of Tokyo. Kumamoto, it was said, would give students 125 marks out of 100 when he liked their answers, but minus 25 points for poor answers. The poet and literary critic Shiki Masaoka was among those who failed under him.

Around the same time, the educator Raphael von Koeber, who was from Russia, was teaching philosophy at the university. He would ask students who were unable to provide answers in oral tests how many marks they wanted, and give them that score. When he was criticized by fellow philosopher Tetsujiro Inoue over his handouts of full marks, he paid no heed, asking if he should instead give a uniform grade of 30 percent the following year.

Now, some students may get away with submitting weak reports. The teachers who generously hand out marks to students when they assemble lines of text into reports are popular. Taking a look at society today, it would seem that similar practices have emerged in connection with the government's moves toward restarting Japan's nuclear reactors.

The government is expected to make a decision on restarting the No. 3 and 4 reactors at the Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture as early as this week. It has already judged that most of the safety measures presented by plant operator Kansai Electric Power Co. deserve a passing grade. But the standard for getting a passing grade is simply a matter of including venting devices, quake proof office facilities, and so on in future design plans.

However, this is not just a matter of whether a student advances to the next grade or not; we are talking about the safety of nuclear power plants. Surely there are some who harbor **concerns about the way safety measures are simply being listed in reports rather than actually being implemented.**

The public harbor mistrust toward conventional nuclear power safety administration methods which one could liken to asking power companies how many marks they want and then giving them that score. It is only natural for people to suspect that passing grades are being dished out easily.

When the government makes its decision, the need to restart nuclear reactors based on electricity supply and demand will be balanced against risks associated with restarting the reactors. The government needs to explain the issues clearly so that people can see it is not deducting a few marks off one issue or adding a few more to another. ("Yoroku," a front-page column in the Mainichi Shimbun)

So it is possible

Panel sees 25% gas emissions cut possible without nuclear energy

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120412p2g00m0dm093000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A panel under the Environment Ministry has stated in a draft report it is possible for Japan to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2030 from 1990 levels without relying on nuclear power, ministry officials said Thursday.

The potential reduction would be contingent on greater efforts to take energy conservation measures and adopt renewables, the officials said. The panel also said the figure could go up to 33 percent if nuclear power accounts for 20 percent of domestic power supply in 2030.

The projections made by the panel under the ministry's Central Environment Council contrast with those approved by the industry ministry's Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy on Wednesday, which calculate carbon dioxide emission reductions of just 16 percent in 2030 if idled nuclear reactors remain offline.

Japan has pledged internationally to reduce heat-trapping gas emissions by 25 percent in 2020 from 1990 levels, a target some critics say is now difficult to attain in light of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. The draft does not include calculations for 2020.

The government's Energy and Environment Council is expected to draw up a final strategy by this summer based on those calculations.

The draft was based on calculations conducted by the National Institute for Environmental Studies under four scenarios with nuclear power accounting for between zero and 35 percent of power supply.

Until the Fukushima disaster, Japan was banking on increasing reliance on nuclear power to meet its 25-percent reduction pledge because in generating electricity nuclear power emits substantially fewer amounts of CO₂, a substance that causes global warming, than thermal power.

Unsinkable undertakings?

The Titanic and the nuclear fiasco

The Japan Times: Sunday, April 15, 2012 - <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ed20120415a1.html>

On the night of April 15, 1912, 100 years ago today, the allegedly unsinkable luxury liner RMS Titanic sank in the North Atlantic after hitting an iceberg. Of the ship's 2,200 passengers, 1,500 lost their lives. Since then the Titanic has become an object lesson, an obsession and the subject of countless books and films.

The theories about why the largest and most expensive ship of its time failed in its promise and dropped to the ocean floor are plentiful and diverse. Investigators, researchers and conspiracy theorists have variously blamed the ship's design, the laxness of the crew, the inferior quality of the ship's rivets and hull steel, the poor design of the watertight compartments, record high tides, ocean mirages and of course, the infamous iceberg. Clearly, though, it was no one single cause, but a "perfect storm" of factors. The disaster would have been mitigated, though, by less arrogance and more precaution.

Presenting technology as completely safe, trustworthy or miraculous may seem to be a thing of the past, but the parallels between the Titanic and Japan's nuclear power industry could not be clearer. Japan's nuclear power plants were, like the Titanic, advertised as marvels of modern science that were completely safe. Certain technologies, whether they promise to float a luxury liner or provide clean energy, can never be made entirely safe.

In both cases, contingencies plans failed: the Titanic carried too few lifeboats; Tokyo Electric Power Co. failed to develop evacuation and backup plans for its Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The design, construction, materials and safety checks were all compromised. The main difference is that the catastrophic effects of the Fukushima fiasco are more far-reaching and long lasting. The plant's name has already become synonymous with disaster.

Not long after the Titanic sank, the company that built the ship retrofit its other two sister ships with stronger hulls. Was the company admitting a flaw or just being careful? Or were they being, at last, wise? Given what's at stake, the government, Tepco and the rest of Japan's power companies must act prudently and retrofit the nation's other nuclear power plants with stronger safeguards in the short term and, in the long term, concede that other forms of energy are demonstrably safer.

In an article not long after the Titanic sank, writer Joseph Conrad commented on the tragedy by noting the "chastening influence it should have on the self-confidence of mankind." **That lesson should be applied to all "unsinkable" undertakings that might profit a few by imperiling the majority of others.**

Antinukes start hunger strike

April 17, 2012

Anti-nuclear activists go on hunger strike

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120417_27.html

A group of anti-nuclear activists has begun a hunger strike in Tokyo to protest the restarting of nuclear reactors along the Japan Sea coast.

About 30 members of the group began the strike on Tuesday in front of the industry ministry as the government continued to take steps to restart 2 reactors at the Ohi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture. The reactors are offline for regular inspections.

The group told reporters that it cannot allow the resumption while the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant continues and reasons for the accident remain undetermined.

About 100 supporters of the group gathered to listen to the activists.

The group says the hunger strike will continue until May 5th, when the country's last operating reactor is set to go offline for regular inspections in Hokkaido.

The group has been staying in tents near the ministry since last September, demanding that the government abolish all nuclear power plants.

Shut Hamaoka

Tuesday, April 17, 2012

Editorial: No choice but to decommission Hamaoka nuclear plant

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120417p2a00m0na004000c.html>

An expert panel to the Cabinet Office released last month an estimate that a 21-meter-high tsunami could hit Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka nuclear power station in Omaezaki, Shizuoka Prefecture, if a massive earthquake occurred in the Nankai Trough in the seabed off central to western Japan.

Chubu Electric has been building breakwaters and other facilities to protect the nuclear plant from potential tsunami at a cost of 140 billion yen as it eyes reactivation of the plant that was suspended on the heels of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. However, **the breakwaters will be 18 meters high**, falling short of the possible 21-meter-high tsunami estimated by the Cabinet Office. How, then, would the utility be able to deal with possible natural calamities?

On April 16, the utility filed an impact assessment based on the 21-meter-high tsunami estimate, in compliance with a request by the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA). Because all the reactors at the Hamaoka nuclear plant have been suspended, their safety can be guaranteed as long as they remain under suspension, the assessment states.

However, it is impossible to convince the public with such reasoning. The assessment does not envisage a case in which the reactors at the Hamaoka nuclear plant are in operation. In the meantime, extending the breakwaters upward would not guarantee absolute safety, as there are uncertainties in the Cabinet Office's estimate.

Needless to say, the Hamaoka plant is not the only nuclear power station that poses a danger. Following the onset of the Fukushima nuclear crisis in March 2011, it has become clear that every nuclear power plant across Japan is a potential safety threat.

That being said, the Hamaoka plant obviously stands out from all the others as the facility is **located right above the epicentral area of a possible massive earthquake**. In addition, the social impact in case of a nuclear disaster at the plant is expected to be enormously grave.

Furthermore, the country's main transportation arteries such as the Tokaido Shinkansen line and Tomei Expressway run near the Hamaoka plant. **Once a major accident occurs at the facility, it would not only cause damage to a large portion of the population but also cut the eastern and western regions on the Japanese archipelago.**

Evacuation and rescue efforts would also be greatly affected. On top of the agriculture and fishing sectors, other industries in the region would also suffer major damage, the result of which could possibly affect the entire nation.

The fact is that however much the hardware side is improved based on quake and tsunami estimates, the plant's safety cannot be entirely guaranteed. In light of its location characteristics, the Hamaoka nuclear plant should be decommissioned. It would be the best policy to develop an exit strategy.

In the Omaezaki mayoral race, in which the Hamaoka nuclear plant became a major point of contention, an incumbent mayor was re-elected after he withheld from taking a clear stance toward whether to reactivate the Hamaoka plant. The fact that a fresh candidate who was opposed to reactivating the plant failed to garner much support from voters represents locals' fears that the facility's decommissioning would adversely affect local economies.

However, **the Fukushima nuclear disaster has demonstrated that a nuclear accident would devastate local economies.** The central and prefectural governments are urged to provide support and contrive ways to ensure local economies remain affluent even without nuclear power stations.

Chubu Electric is less dependent on nuclear power generation than other utilities in the country. If Chubu Electric can demonstrate the possibility of breaking away from nuclear power generation, it would push forward the central government's policy of lessening its dependence on nuclear power. We greatly anticipate the utility's wise decision to shut the Hamaoka nuclear plant.

Taro Yamamoto

April 18, 2012

Actor who has been advocating denuclearization to enter firm selling solar power equipment

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20120418p2g00m0et047000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Taro Yamamoto, an actor who has been campaigning for denuclearization since the eruption of the Fukushima nuclear crisis a year ago, will enter a company selling solar power generation equipment, sources close to the 37-year-old actor said Tuesday.

But Yamamoto will not go to work every day at the company headquartered in Yokohama, near Tokyo, and will seek to continue his acting career, the sources said.

The actor's life took a sharp turn after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami and the subsequent nuclear crisis, as he began actively advocating denuclearization. Last December, Yamamoto was interrogated by public prosecutors over trespassing charges after he forcibly entered the Saga prefectural government offices to urge the governor not to reactivate local idled nuclear reactors in the prefecture, for which he was later exempted from prosecution.

After launching a series of activities related to nuclear power, Yamamoto ceased his contract with an agent who had been in charge of his acting job management, and broke up with his girlfriend, he said.

In January, Yamamoto said when he appeared on a talk show in Tokyo to promote a South Korean movie in which he played a role, "I have yet to see the movie because I've been busy these days with (nuclear-related) civic activities. I'm 20 times busier than before, but my income has dropped to less than a tenth because I'm getting no job offers."

It's not up to politicians to judge nuke safety

April 24, 2012

Osaka Mayor conveys gov't opposition to early restart of reactors

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120424p2g00m0dm079000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto who leads an up-and-coming political group conveyed his opposition to the early restart of idled nuclear reactors in a meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura Tuesday in Tokyo.

Osaka Gov. Ichiro Matsui who serves as secretary general of the political group, called Osaka Ishin no Kai (Osaka restoration group), also attended the meeting, where he and Hashimoto made eight proposals directly to Fujimura concerning the central government's nuclear policy.

"It is absolutely wrong for politicians to play a leading role in judging the safety of nuclear reactors," Hashimoto said during the meeting with Fujimura at the prime minister's office.

The meeting came after Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, Fujimura, and two other ministers earlier this month confirmed that the two offline reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture are safe to restart and that it is necessary to do so to ensure stable power supplies this summer. The ministers have started seeking cooperation for the restart from local authorities near the plant.

Among the eight proposals, Hashimoto and Matsui called on the central government to establish the structure needed to implement the final disposal of nuclear spent fuel. They also urged the government to create a system to enable the conclusion of a safety treaty between power plant operators and municipalities located within 100 kilometers of nuclear power plants.

After their meeting, Hashimoto criticized the government's procedures for reactivating the two Oi reactors, telling reporters that instead of politicians, the Nuclear Safety Commission should issue its opinion on the safety of the reactors.

Hashimoto's political group has been critical of the government and said it is even ready to confront the ruling Democratic Party of Japan in the next House of Representatives election.

The Osaka city government, the largest stakeholder of Kansai Electric, plans to propose the abolishment of all nuclear reactors as soon as possible at the utility's shareholders meeting in June.

Since the Fukushima nuclear crisis triggered by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, no Japanese reactors have resumed operation after being shut down for mandatory periodic checks, and the Oi reactors are front-runners in the process of resuming operations among dozens of reactors idled for routine checks.

The two reactors have won the endorsement of the results of first-stage stress tests on them by the government's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency and the Nuclear Safety Commission.

How to manage without

April 25, 2012

Editorial: Preparing for summer without nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120425p2a00m0na013000c.html>

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto and Osaka Gov. Ichiro Matsui have submitted an eight-point proposal to Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura regarding the reactivation of the No. 3 and 4 reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.

(KEPCO)'s Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture. The proposal offers valid suggestions, including a review of the standards by which the reactors have been deemed safe; the establishment of a risk-management scheme and an anti-disaster plan to cope with major accidents; and the assessment of power supply and demand.

Fujimura simply responded that the points "should be considered in the future" -- a comment underscoring the government's drive to restart the Oi reactors. However, the government must take the proposal seriously. Without doing so, the prospects of gaining the public's understanding and approval will only grow dimmer.

Prior to the Osaka politicians' move, Yukiko Kada and Keiji Yamada, the governors of Shiga and Kyoto prefectures, which lie adjacent to Fukui Prefecture, had presented the government with seven conditions

for the reactivation of the Oi nuclear reactors. Some items, such as the assessment of power supply and demand, overlap with the Osaka politicians' proposal.

Seishu Makino, senior vice minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, visited both Shiga and Kyoto prefectures to explain the developments that led the government to judge that restarting the Oi reactors was a sound move. He also explained the prospect of the Kansai region suffering a power shortage this summer. However, Makino offered no specific responses to the seven criteria that had been submitted, and not surprisingly, was unable to attain the go-ahead from the two prefectural governments.

A project team within the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) that is dedicated to ending the nuclear crisis is critical of the government's reactivation standards, labeling them "a revival of the nuclear power safety myth." It cites as reasons the fact that a conclusive investigation into the ongoing Fukushima disaster has yet to take place, and that the first-stage results of the so-called stress tests used to assess the safety of halted nuclear reactors cannot guarantee residents' safety.

Amid such developments, nine of the nation's utilities submitted their predictions for power supply and demand this summer to a government panel. According to the utilities' predictions, if temperatures reach levels experienced during the sweltering summer of 2010 and the stalled reactors are not restarted, there will be a 0.4 percent power shortage across the nation in August, and a 16.3 percent shortage in areas under KEPCO. The government panel will release its final conclusion on expected energy supply and demand in mid-May. Based on the information, additional measures such as inter-utility power interchanges and pumped-storage hydroelectricity generation need to be considered.

Also of importance is **curbing energy consumption during peak times**. Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), operator of the stricken Fukushima power plant, has implemented a system in which it remotely controls air conditioners and lighting at companies with which it has made prior arrangements. As a result, TEPCO predicts that demand for power within its jurisdiction can be reduced by some 400,000 kilowatts of energy in fiscal 2012. In fiscal 2014, that figure is expected to be around 1.4 million kilowatts, or the equivalent of at least one nuclear reactor. KEPCO, too, should take aggressive steps in containing power demand.

In the meantime, we call for the national and local governments to set up anti-risk measures in preparation for a summer without nuclear power. In Tokyo, for example, backup batteries have been distributed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government free of charge to those who use artificial ventilators at home since July 2011. This move came after medical facilities scrambled to secure batteries to use during the rolling blackouts that took place last year. In March this year, the metropolitan government established guidelines in assisting artificial ventilator users in the event of a disaster. We would also like to see a system by which information is disseminated to residents during power outages. Taking such steps is far more likely to win the understanding and approval of the public than reactivating nuclear reactors.

Of course, the economic effects of any move must be assessed carefully. But **if we are able to get through the coming summer through various energy-saving strategies, it will give us the confidence to take a big step toward a society without nuclear power.**

Antinuke hunger strike in Tokyo

May 3, 2012

Setouchi joins antinuclear hunger strike

The Yomiuri Shimbun

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120502004560.htm>

Authors Jakucho Setouchi and Hisae Sawachi joined a hunger strike Wednesday to express their opposition to the possible resumption of two reactors at a nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

A citizens group is holding the hunger strike in front of the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry in Tokyo.

"Many Japanese died in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki," Setouchi, 89, said after she arrived at the site at about 9:30 a.m. in a wheelchair. "I feel ashamed that we have submissively used power generated by nuclear reactors. We should get rid of them."

Sawachi, 81, said the government should promise to eliminate Japan's nuclear power plants. "I worry about the future lives of Japanese," she said.

Setouchi and Sawachi took part in the hunger strike until sunset.

The group is protesting against the plan to restart two suspended reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi power plant.

"No more Fukushima!"

May 5, 2012

News

Last Japanese nuclear reactor shuts down

05/05 13:44 CET

<http://www.euronews.com/2012/05/05/last-japanese-nuclear-reactor-shuts-down/>

Play/Pause Video

"No more Nagasaki, no more Fukushima," cried thousands of protesters at a rally in Japan as the country's last working nuclear reactor shut down.

It is the first time Japan has been completely without nuclear power in four decades. Those reactors not damaged by the earthquake and tsunami just over a year ago have progressively gone offline for routine maintenance.

Protesters like Saya Saruta, a human rights lawyer, say they should never be restarted.

"After today, we will have zero nuclear plants," she said. "We have to make this zero moment last forever. Not only today or tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, but let's make this zero nuclear plant, forever."

Prior to the Fukushima disaster, 30 per cent of Japan's energy needs were met by nuclear power and the government has warned of power shortages in the hot summer months if some plants aren't restarted.

But with Fukushima continuing to spew radiation into the air and sea, public momentum for a nuclear-free Japan remains strong.

Anti-nukes blues

May 5, 2012

Anti-nuclear activists pessimistic despite historic shutdown

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201205050060

May 05, 2012

By KOSUKE SO/ Staff Writer

Workers at the Tomari nuclear power plant in Hokkaido were preparing on May 5 to power down the plant's No. 3 reactor and leave Japan nuclear-free for the first time in 42 years.

The reactor—the last one operating in the country—was due to be taken offline at around 11 p.m. to undergo regular safety inspection. All of the 49 other nuclear reactors in Japan have been suspended, either because of damage from the Great East Japan Earthquake or because they were shut down for regular checkups and never brought back online.

But, despite the historic shutdown, there is little sense of triumphalism among anti-nuclear activists. Many say they have yet to see the sort of permanent change in public opinion that would block a government push to restart Japan's nuclear reactors.

Yui Kimura, a 59-year-old member of the Nuclear Phase-Out TEPCO Shareholder's Movement, said the temporary halt to Japan's nuclear program is more of a source of worry than joy.

"It is the (Fukushima) accident not public opinion that shut down the nuclear reactors," Kimura said. "I cannot be unreservedly happy about this."

Kimura became an anti-nuclear activist following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident and ran unsuccessfully for Japan's Upper House on an anti-nuclear ticket three years later.

But she said she watched public interest quickly fade away following the shock of the Chernobyl accident, and is worried that a similar process may be under way following the Fukushima crisis.

"A majority of respondents in opinion polls oppose the use of nuclear power, but few of them come to join demonstrations," Kimura said. "People have yet to recognize that nothing will change unless they take an action. If things go on like this, nuclear reactors will be back online soon."

An anti-nuclear drive backed by Nobel Prize-winning writer Kenzaburo Oe to collect 10 million signatures by the end of February ended up with about 5 million.

During a news conference held in February at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo, one foreign journalist asked why fewer people in Japan joined anti-nuclear demonstrations than in Europe.

"I believe the Japanese will make a new resolve," Oe answered.

Yasunari Fujimoto, a 56-year-old member of the 10 Million People's Action secretariat, which was responsible for organizing the signature campaign, said: "There are high hurdles to abolishing nuclear plants, but the government has not managed to restart nuclear reactors because so many people protested. If people continue raising critical voices, the politicians will have to take them into consideration."

Fujimoto said the group hoped to continue collecting signatures until the end of May and hold a rally of about 100,000 people in Tokyo in July.

But writer Keiko Ochiai, who also attended the news conference, was less sanguine. "I am worried that the waves have partially receded," she said.

Part of the reason for the pessimism among some in the anti-nuclear camp is a clear determination at the highest levels of government to push ahead with a revival of the nuclear industry despite public concern. A pivotal date for some was April 13, when Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and three of his Cabinet ministers met at the Prime Minister's Official Residence and backed the restart of the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors of the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture.

A large group of protestors gathered around the Prime Minister's Official Residence when the meeting began at around 6:30 p.m. Company employees in suits and homemakers, who had learned about the protest on Twitter, braved cold rain and shouted slogans like "Stop the restarts" and "We don't need nuclear power."

The protest was a culmination of a series of demonstrations organized in the Tokyo metropolitan area, which started with only 350 at the first event but grew to about 1,600 people by the third demonstration on April 13.

However, disappointment quickly spread through the crowd when they learned, at around 8 p.m., that the government had endorsed the restart plan.

"Let's keep calling loud for no nuke power," said Taichi Hirano, a 27-year-old nursing care worker from Tokyo's Suginami Ward and one of the core members of the organizing group.

"People who were just tweeting on Twitter could no longer put up with the nastiness of the government and came here," he said. "There must be a lot more people who want to speak up."

Others were less positive. Rei Abe, a 24-year-old resident of Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward, said he had joined a campaign to collect signatures to seek a local referendum on the use of nuclear power in Tokyo in December.

He had attended demonstrations but was wondering about their effect. "We can shout, but no nuclear reactor will shut down."

Abe said he saw more hope in an official petition, because it was part of a clearly defined legal process, and spent three months collecting signatures.

The campaign ended up collecting 100,000 more signatures than required and its organizers are planning to officially petition Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara on May 10 to carry out a referendum on the use of nuclear power.

There is no indication, however, that the Tokyo metropolitan assembly, which would be responsible for deciding to conduct such a referendum, will back the plan.

"Nothing has changed about politics, despite the enormous scale of the (Fukushima) accident," Abe said.
By KOSUKE SO/ Staff Writer

Thousands of protestors in Tokyo

Thousands march as Japan shuts off nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120505p2g00m0dm034000c.html>

TOKYO (AP) -- Thousands of Japanese marched to celebrate the last of this nation's 50 nuclear reactors switching off Saturday, shaking banners shaped as giant fish that have become a potent anti-nuclear symbol.

Japan will be without electricity from nuclear power for the first time in four decades when one of three reactors at Tomari nuclear plant in the northern island of Hokkaido goes offline for routine maintenance checks.

After last year's March 11 quake and tsunami set off meltdowns at Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, no reactor stopped for checkups has restarted amid growing public worries about the safety of nuclear technology.

"Today is a historical day," shouted Masashi Ishikawa to a crowd gathered at a Tokyo park, some holding traditional "Koinobori" carp-shaped banners for Children's Day that have grown into a symbol of the anti-nuclear movement.

"There are so many nuclear plants, but not a single one will be up and running today, and that's because of our efforts," Ishikawa said.

The activists said that it was fitting that the day Japan will stop using nuclear power coincided with the nation's annual Children's Day, because of their concerns about protecting children from radiation, which Fukushima Dai-ichi is still spewing into the air and water.

The government has been eager to restart nuclear reactors, warning about blackouts and rising emissions as Japan is forced to turn to oil and gas for energy.

Japan now requires reactors to pass new tests to withstand quakes and tsunami and needs local residents' approval to restart them.

The response from people living near the nuclear plants has been mixed, with some wanting them back in operation because of jobs, subsidies and other benefits to the local economy.

Major protests, like the one Saturday, have been generally limited to urban areas like Tokyo, which had gotten electricity from faraway nuclear plants, including Fukushima Dai-ichi.

Before the nuclear crisis, Japan relied on nuclear power for a third of its electricity needs.

The crowd at the anti-nuclear rally, estimated at 5,500 by organizers, shrugged off government warnings about a power shortage. If anything, they said, with all the reactors going offline one by one, it was clear the nation didn't really need nuclear power.

Whether Japan will suffer a sharp power crunch is still unclear.

Electricity shortage is expected only at peak periods, such as the middle of the day in hot weather, and critics of nuclear power say the proponents are exaggerating the consequences to win public approval to restart reactors.

Hokkaido Electric Power Co. spokesman Kohei Ofusa said Saturday's shutdown was going ahead as planned. Power generation is gradually being turned down from 5 p.m. (0800 GMT) with all operation ending at 11 p.m. (1400 GMT), he said.

Yoko Kataoka, a retired baker and grandmother, who was dancing to the music at the rally waving a small paper Koinobori, said she was happy the reactors were going off.

"Let's leave an earth where our children and grandchildren can all play without worries," she said, wearing a shirt that had, "No thank you, nukes," handwritten in the back.

Time to rethink lifestyles?

May 5, 2012

Nuclear plant engineer says halt of Tomari reactor marks time to review lifestyles

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120505p2a00m0na020000c.html>

An elderly engineer who was involved in the activation of Japan's first commercial light water reactor at the Tsuruga nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture in 1970 is calling May 5, 2012 "an important day to consider Japanese lifestyles."

On May 5, when the No. 3 reactor at Hokkaido Electric Power Co.'s Tomari nuclear plant is suspended for regular inspections, Japan will mark the first time in 42 years it has had no nuclear power plants in operation.

Holding a picture dated March 14, 1970, engineer Kazushige Hamazaki, 80, recalls his enthusiasm as Japan surged ahead with nuclear power generation.

"I never felt tired as I was filled with the feeling that I was going to support Japan's economic development," recalled Hamazaki, former vice president of the Japan Atomic Power Co. At 4 a.m. that day, the No. 1 reactor at the Tsuruga nuclear plant completed its 100-hour electricity-generation trial. While the facility's central control room was filled with "banzai" celebration chants, Hamazaki, then head of the power generation division, felt a sense of fulfillment as he held a key-shaped commemorative gift offered by plant supplier General Electric (GE).

When Hamazaki went outside, he saw Tsuruga Bay shining in the rising sun. Several hours later, the electricity generated at the plant was transmitted to the venue of the Osaka Expo, which kicked off the same day. "The light of atomic power has arrived," an announcement echoed throughout the venue.

After graduating from university, Hamazaki joined Chubu Electric Power Co. in 1954 -- not long before Japan entered its high economic growth period. One day, he saw a magazine article about nuclear power generation in the United States, the Soviet Union and European countries. "As a country of poor energy resources, there's no question Japan will need nuclear energy," he recalls thinking.

Hamazaki studied in the United Kingdom and later passed the first national exam for licensed engineers of nuclear reactors in 1959. He transferred to Japan Atomic Power Co. in 1963, where he worked for the activation of the Tsuruga nuclear power plant.

"Even though the No. 1 reactor at the Tsuruga nuclear plant was delivered (by GE) in the name of 'proven technology,' the reactor was hit by one problem after another, starting immediately after its activation," said Hamazaki. He said that the facility's mechanism to treat and store radioactive waste was insufficient and that the pipe welding was bad. Every time a malfunction took place, Hamazaki struggled to overcome it.

"It took 10 years to make the nuclear plant full-fledged. Japan's nuclear plants rose to a level where people placed faith in them after many trials and errors," he said.

Some 30 years later, however, Hamazaki was devastated to see footage of the reactor buildings at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant explode in March 2011 following a massive earthquake and tsunami.

"I felt as if I was thrown into an abyss," recalls Hamazaki. The multifaceted protections that he had believed would provide "absolute" safety were easily destroyed by the massive tsunami.

Although Hamazaki believes that "reactivation of nuclear plants is indispensable unless we have an alternative power supply," he continued, "This (May 5) will inevitably be the day when all Japanese people reconsider how Japan's energy policy should be, including reviewing our lifestyles."

What renewable mix?

May 3, 2012

INSIGHT: Crisis-hit Japan mulls shift to renewable energy

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201205030103>

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Another long, stupefyingly hot summer is looming for Japan just as it shuts down its last operating nuclear power reactor, worsening a squeeze on electricity and adding urgency to calls for a green energy revolution.

On May 5, Tomari nuclear power plant in Hokkaido, the last of the country's 50 usable nuclear reactors, will be switched off, completely idling a power source that once supplied a third of Japan's electricity. At a time when temptation to set the aircon to deep freeze is at its greatest, companies and ordinary Japanese will be obliged to economize amid temperatures that can climb above 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit).

Nuclear energy seemed a steady mainstay of Japan's power supply until the March 11, 2011, tsunami crippled the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in the worst atomic accident since the 1986 Chernobyl explosion. Authorities have since tightened safety standards and refrained from restarting reactors that were shut down, mostly for routine checks.

To offset the shortfall, utilities have ramped up oil- and gas-based generation, giving resource-poor Japan, the world's third-largest economy, its biggest annual trade deficit ever last fiscal year. That \$100 million-plus a day extra cost, worries over the risks of nuclear power and concern over carbon emissions are leading many decision-makers to view renewable energy such as solar, hydro and wind more positively.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has pledged to reduce Japan's reliance on nuclear power over time. And Japan is debating renewable energy targets of between 25 percent to 35 percent of total power generation

by 2030, looking to Germany, which raised the proportion of renewables from 5 percent in 1990 to 20 percent by 2010.

"If Japan has the motivation, it can do this, too," said Sei Kato, deputy director of the Environment Ministry's Low Carbon Society Promotion Office. "We have the technological know-how. Japan can do anything that Germany can."

Real change has been slow. Giant solar arrays and wind farms can't be built overnight and powerful utilities that spent billions on nuclear are lobbying to protect their interests. The government is muddling along, seemingly unable to take a decisive stand either way as opinion becomes increasingly polarized between mavericks calling for massive investment in alternative energy sources and big business interests that favor keeping Japan Inc. nuclear powered.

Many believe Japan has little choice but to restart nuclear reactors even in the face of spirited public opposition. Utilities predict power supplies could fall 16 percent below demand in western Japan during the summer peak.

The government is eager to restart some reactors in coming months if it can persuade skeptical local leaders and residents that they are safe.

"The bottom line is that without nuclear power Japan will have a very hard time meeting demand," said Paul Scalise, a fellow at the University of Tokyo who specializes in Japan's energy sector.

Oil, coal and gas now generate about nearly 90 percent of Japan's electricity, with hydropower accounting for about 8 percent and other renewables -- solar, wind, geothermal and biomass -- making up the balance.

The International Energy Agency estimates shutting all nuclear plants increases oil demand by 465,000 barrels a day to 4.5 million barrels a day, raising Japan's daily costs by about \$100 million.

Hiroshi Hamasaki, an energy expert at Fujitsu Research Institute, estimates that with stable feed-in tariffs, which guarantee renewable energy producers a fixed price for their power, renewable energy generation could surge by 200 times over the next three years.

"There will be a boom close to a bubble, with many companies rushing to enter the market over the next three to five years," Hamasaki said.

Although experts are enthusiastic, green energy in Japan still faces numerous obstacles and headwinds. Besides the nuclear industry's vested interests, those barriers include stifling regulations, a power grid ill-

suited to accommodating volatile solar and wind energy, and the huge upfront costs of building solar or geothermal plants. Both are technologies in which Japan is a world leader, although it has lost out to China in solar cost competitiveness.

To help move things along, the government is easing restrictions on land use for solar and wind power. It also is relaxing regulations on small hydropower projects and regulations on drilling for geothermal energy in national parks.

More crucially, last week it approved feed-in tariffs that are expected to spur investment by guaranteeing higher returns for renewable than for conventional energy.

From July, utilities will be required to buy electricity from renewable energy from providers at a rate of 42 yen (\$0.52) per kilowatt hour (kwh) for solar energy, 23 yen/kwh for wind power and 30-35 yen/kwh for small-scale hydropower. These preferential rates will apply for 10 to 20 years depending on the energy source.

Most of those higher rates will be passed on directly to consumers.

That business incentive is essential, said Masayoshi Son, a telecoms tycoon and leading proponent of renewable energy. He said the rates were a "good start," adding that if prices were any lower, "Japan would likely never see a new energy era."

Son, founder of telephone company Softbank Corp., set up SB Energy Corp. in October, 2011, to promote, generate and sell renewable energy.

The company has begun building five mega-solar plants across the country, with output capacity of 2.1 megawatts to 2.8 megawatts. The first will begin operations as soon as July 1. That is still just a fraction of Japan's 3.5 gigawatts of installed solar capacity.

The Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan says member companies are building 20 mega-solar facilities capable of providing 103 megawatts by March 2015.

A vocal critic of Japan's business establishment for years, Son has publicly blasted Japan's regulators and utilities for working together to block new entrants and keep the power rates consumers pay high.

But the heavy political influence once exerted by the country's "nuclear village" of power companies and regulators is waning, experts say.

"Before, many companies were reluctant to move toward renewable energy because they were afraid of displeasing the utilities, but that has changed," said Koichi Kitazawa, head of an independent commission investigating the Fukushima crisis and former president of the Science and Technology Agency.

Many of Japan's biggest corporations, from steel mills and automakers to ceramics and electronics makers also are developing renewable technologies, often incorporating solar and wind power features into their own offices and factories.

Most renewable initiatives remain piecemeal, such as a "smart community" plan for Kamaishi, a tsunami-hit city planning to rebuild as an eco-town powered by solar, wind and other renewable energy.

Unlike a European country such as Denmark, which has pledged to shift entirely to renewable energy by 2050, Japan is an island isolated from neighboring countries. An Asian "super grid" proposed by Son that would link Japan to mainland Asia, and massive wind power capacity in the Gobi desert, will take years and could prove prohibitively expensive.

Even Son concedes that renewable energy is going to serve only a small percentage of electricity demand over the next few years.

"The point is to change components of the energy mix 10, 20 or 50 years from now," he said.

Tetsunari Iida on clean energy

Sunday, May 6, 2012

New push should be for renewables

By KAZUAKI NAGATA
Staff writer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120506a6.html>

With the nation's last operating commercial reactor ceasing operations Saturday, The Japan Times interviewed two energy experts to explore the future of nuclear power in Japan.

Instead of scrambling to restart two idled reactors at the Oi power plant, the government should start capping the amount of spent nuclear fuel and boost use of renewable energies as a means to completely eliminate nuclear power in the long term, according to clean energy expert **Tetsunari Iida**.

The government and Kansai Electric Power Co.'s current haste to fire up the Oi nuclear plant reactors in Fukui Prefecture is "completely irrational," said Iida, one of 25 members on an industry ministry panel drafting Japan's medium- to long-term energy strategy.

Before resuming operations at any reactors, the government should at the very least set up a new "credible" nuclear regulatory body and await the final reports of state- and Diet-backed panels investigating the Fukushima nuclear crisis, Iida, also executive director of the Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies, told The Japan Times recently.

"There's no way we should restart any reactors until the final reports (on the Fukushima disaster) are released, and we identify the full extent of the problems," he said.

The government had planned to launch a new nuclear industry watchdog in April, but the requisite legislation is still being deliberated at the Diet amid resistance from opposition parties.

"I think we need to establish a social consensus on how many more tons of spent fuel nuclear operators are allowed to generate" when a final disposal method has not even been established yet, said Iida, who was opposed to nuclear power long before the Fukushima disaster erupted last March.

Describing the nation's long-term nuclear fuel cycle as unsustainable, Iida predicted the amount of accumulated spent fuel would reach a maximum capacity of around 20,630 tons in the coming decade if atomic power plants were to keep operating at their normal pace — that is, assuming they are restarted. Around 14,200 tons of spent nuclear fuel were being stored at various facilities nationwide as of September, and utilities were churning out about 1,000 tons each year until the Fukushima No. 1 plant meltdowns forced them to shut their reactors last March, according to government estimates.

The industry ministry's panel on energy policy has been studying what should be Japan's optimal mix of power sources up to 2030.

Iida said Japan's ratio of renewable energies, such as solar, wind and geothermal power, should be tripled from the present 10 percent to at least 30 percent of the total electricity supply by 2030, and that all nuclear power generation should be phased out by that date.

Nuclear power accounted for about 30 percent Japan's total energy supply before three reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 power station suffered catastrophic meltdowns triggered by events linked to the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Other countries, most notably Germany, have considerably increased their use of renewable energies over the past decade, according to Iida, who also serves as an energy policy adviser to Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, a staunch opponent of restarting idled reactors in the Kansai region.

"We now know the potential of renewable energy. There is no need to return to nuclear power," Iida said.

At the same time, he takes a pragmatic approach toward the nation's energy needs and is not opposed to firing up reactors in the near future, given that constructing green energy facilities will take years, if not decades.

But he firmly opposes a resumption of operations at the Oi plant at present, and accused the government and Kansai Electric of remaining trapped in the "myth" of nuclear safety and of lacking adequate response measures, and even awareness, about potential future disasters.

He said **critical safety features still haven't been introduced at the Oi plant, including a high, reinforced seawall to guard against higher-than-predicted tsunami, and a quake-resistant, airtight operations center.**

When Iida pointed out the lack of such measures to Kepco officials and asked them about their response plans in the event of a nuclear disaster at Oi, they would only reply that serious accidents would be prevented, he said.

On the possibility of power shortages in Kansai if the utility fails to get its reactors back online by summer, Iida said the projected shortfall of roughly 4.95 million kw could be covered through electricity-saving efforts and alternative energy suppliers.

Kansai Electric will probably also receive support from other utilities facing less-severe supply crunches in their service areas, including Hokuriku Electric Power Co., he suggested.

Still, the high costs of running thermal power plants while their reactor operations remain stalled have severely dented utilities' finances, and they will probably have to raise electricity rates to stave off bankruptcy if their current woes continue, Iida said.

Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the wrecked Fukushima No. 1 plant, has already implemented such measures, hiking charges for its large-lot customers in April. The utility also plans to raise fees for household consumers in the future, although this would require special government approval in advance.

In light of the current situation, Iida called on the government to impose a "nuclear power moratorium" for a set period of time, during which the state would cover utilities' soaring fuel costs to ensure an uninterrupted electricity supply and work to vastly improve safety at atomic energy plants.

Mixed feelings

Japan shows mixed reaction to lack of nuclear energy

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120506p2g00m0dm061000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- People showed mixed reactions to the suspension of Japan's last commercial nuclear reactor Saturday with some in business circles and host municipalities calling for early reactivation of nuclear energy and others backing the halt of atomic energy due to safety concerns.

Hiromasa Yonekura, head of the Japan Business Federation, called for the reactivation of nuclear reactors, expressing concern about effects of the suspension of nuclear energy on economic activities.

Yonekura, who heads the country's largest business lobby, also said utilities have boosted the capacity of their thermal power plants but "that can little help stabilize power supply" which is essential for businesses.

Hokkaido Electric Power Co. suspended the No. 3 reactor of its Tomari plant for regular checkups as the last running unit among the 50 reactors in Japan in the wake of the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant crippled by the March 2011 devastating earthquake and tsunami.

Makoto Yagi, chairman of the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan, said in a statement, "We will try to regain trust from society especially from the areas hosting nuclear plants and continue making utmost efforts so that we can restart nuclear plants as soon as possible."

Tomari Mayor Hiroomi Makino also called for reactivation of the Tomari plant. "We're worried about the safety of nuclear reactors following the Fukushima accident but we want an early reactivation" of the Tomari plant, Makino said, citing economic benefits his village can gain by hosting it.

"I feel sorry. That's all," said a 73-year-old retired senior official of Hokkaido Electric Power Co. "If we lose nuclear plants, efforts by people who were involved in construction of them and technicians...what was that all about?"

In Sapporo, about 60 kilometers from Tomari, about 450 demonstrators marched through the streets welcoming the absence of nuclear energy in Japan.

Toshihiro Yauchi, 39, said during the rally, "I don't want any reactivation of nuclear reactors."

Miyoshi Aida, a 58-year-old worker at the Fukushima Daiichi plant who lives in a temporary housing unit in Fukushima Prefecture, said, "I believe it's realistic we don't operate any nuclear plants." Aida is from Okuma, which is in a no-go zone near the crippled Fukushima plant.

Shizuoka Gov. Heita Kawakatsu criticized the government's response after the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, saying the government "is vacillating between (the need of ensuring) safety and (the need of ensuring) stable power supply and unable to gain public understanding."

The prefecture, southwest of Tokyo, hosts the Hamaoka nuclear plant on the Pacific coast which has been suspended at the request of the government due to concerns about a powerful earthquake predicted for the area.

Minamata/Fukushima

May 7, 2012

Citizens' gathering focuses on Minamata, Fukushima

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120507p2g00m0dm037000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A Minamata disease sufferer suggested at a citizens' gathering Sunday that **the government has learned no lessons from the mercury-poisoning disease dating back to the 1950s and repeated bumbles in tackling the Fukushima nuclear crisis.**

"People found crows and doves unable to fly in the coastal areas of Minamata, while livestock such as pigs and chickens died after eating fish entrails in the early 1950s," Takeshi Sugimoto said in a speech at the meeting in Tokyo. "And handicapped babies were born in the areas."

They were apparently contaminated with mercury-laced water dumped by chemical maker Chisso Corp. into Minamata Bay, which led health authorities to officially recognize Minamata disease on May 1, 1956.

The gathering was sponsored by nonprofit organization Minamata Forum to mark the 56th anniversary of the official recognition of Minamata disease, which causes various symptoms, such as sensory impairment in the limbs.

"We were aware that something odd was happening, but we could not ban fishing in the bay and could not stop the discharge of water (from the Chisso factory) in the absence of sufficient information," Sugimoto, a 72-year-old fisherman from Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture, told the audience of around 700 people.

"It has been said on various occasions that we need to learn lessons from Minamata disease, but the government has made mistakes in tackling the Fukushima nuclear disaster as it did" in dealing with the disease, he said.

It has been pointed out following the nuclear crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi power complex that **the government's failure to disclose data on the predicted dispersion of radioactive materials, collected by its System for Prediction of Environmental Emergency Dose Information, caused unnecessary exposure to people living nearby.**

Sugimoto, who was certified as a Minamata disease sufferer in 1981 at the age of 42, also said in the case of Minamata, it had been a taboo to publicly talk about the disease. "If someone in a family developed the disease, they hid the victim in an inner chamber."

It was once believed that Minamata disease was contagious, stirring **discrimination against its victims and their families** as well as Minamata citizens as a whole.

Genichiro Takahashi, a popular writer who also spoke at the gathering, said referring to the suspension on Saturday of Japan's last operating commercial nuclear reactor at Hokkaido Electric Power Co.'s Tomari complex, "It is a good opportunity for us to think about what kind of world we should and want to create."

"We need to learn from (the disasters of) Minamata and Fukushima and hand the lessons down to the future," said Takahashi, also a professor at Meiji Gakuin University.

The third speaker, Yuko Tanaka, professor of modern Japanese culture at Hosei University, said she went through the issues surrounding Minamata disease during her younger days, and that she felt that she lived at the expense of others.

"Now I think the Minamata issue was behind Japan's postwar high economic growth," she said.

In 1956, the year when Minamata disease was officially recognized, the then Economic Planning Agency proudly declared the end of the postwar reconstruction era at the dawn of the period of high economic growth.

What energy roadmap for Japan?

May 7, 2012

With no nuke reactors in operation, Japan struggles to chart new energy strategy

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120507p2a00m0na014000c.html>

As Japan no longer has any operating commercial nuclear reactors following the halt of its last commercial nuclear reactor on the night of May 5, the reality in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster symbolizes a major turning point in the nation's energy policy.

The government, citing a possible summertime power shortage, is trying to restart the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture, while exploring the feasibility of ending Japan's reliance on nuclear power in the long run.

But the government has yet to chart a course toward a future nuclear energy strategy because it is uncertain if Japan will follow in the footsteps of Germany and graduate from atomic energy or how it will find alternative sources of energy to replace nuclear power.

The basic policy panel of the Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy, an advisory body to the economy, trade and industry minister, has held debate on a review of Japan's current energy plan since April. Members of the panel have been divided over a ratio of nuclear power in relation to the nation's total power generation in 2030. Under the energy plan mapped out in June 2010, the government had proposed building more than 14 new reactors and raising the share of nuclear power in relation to total domestic power generation to 53 percent by 2030.

Panel members came up with four scenarios highlighting figures on a desirable energy mix for 2030 ranging in the share of nuclear power from zero to 35 percent as well as one scenario which would ask users to choose such a share to analyze possible effects on the nation's employment and economy. The panel will narrow down the options before presenting them to the public but difficulties in having the plan accepted are expected.

During meetings of the basic policy panel, anti-nuclear members criticized a proposal to set the share of nuclear power at 35 percent, saying it runs counter to the government's policy to end Japan's reliance on nuclear power and questions the wisdom of the panel. They demanded the proposal be dropped from the options. They also argued that the public will not accept the proposal because the 35 percent share is far bigger than a share of about 26 percent in fiscal 2010 prior to the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

On the other hand, some further members who were former business leaders expressed concern about a possible deepening power shortage due to a sudden departure from nuclear generation and supported measures to restart idled nuclear reactors based on the premise of safety confirmation and on keeping the share of nuclear power at the current level of more than 20 percent.

The government is also undecided on the fate of aging nuclear power plants. A nuclear power safety reform bill now before the Diet sets the service span of nuclear plants at 40 years in principle but it can be extended for a maximum of 20 years in exceptional circumstances. Nuclear disaster minister Goshi Hosono says nuclear reactors will be decommissioned after 40 years in principle but the definition of exceptional circumstances is vague.

Some government officials suggest that the service life of nuclear reactors can be extended to 60 years only once if nuclear power operators apply.

According to the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy, the share of nuclear energy will automatically drop to 13 to 15 percent in 2030 based on an assumption that nuclear reactors will be decommissioned

after 40 years. But if the 60-year exceptional proposal is approved, the nuclear share may total 28 to 32 percent.

Efforts to find alternative sources of power generation which are essential for an end to nuclear power are unclear. The government is pinning its hopes on renewable energy sources such as solar power and wind-power generation.

Under a new system to oblige electric power companies to purchase all electricity from renewable energy operators from July, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry plans to set the price tag of solar power at 42 yen per kilowatt per hour to encourage renewable energy operators. But even if large-scale hydraulic power is combined, raising the share of renewable energy from the current 10 percent to 25 to 35 percent in 2030 is not so easy.

The power-generating costs of renewable energy are higher than those of thermal power generation at 9 to 10 yen per kilowatt per hour and are added to utilities fees, causing greater burden on households and companies. Unless those costs are cut, the government will not be able to promote renewable energy.

The combined share of cogeneration reusing thermal energy derived from power generation for air conditioning and hot water and corporate in-house power generation is 15 percent at best. Accordingly, greater thermal power generation fired by liquefied natural gas is a realistic alternative to nuclear power but it also poses problems such as surging fuel costs and emissions of greenhouse gases.

How to manage without nukes

May 7, 2012

Editorial: Seek a way out of reliance on nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120507p2a00m0na006000c.html>

Energy is a matter of life or death for a nation. As such, nuclear power has been an important source of energy for many countries. However, one cannot help but doubt whether Japan really needed so many nuclear power stations as all such plants have now been stopped.

Japan has still not achieved a society without nuclear power plants. It is of great significance for us to experience a society that does not use nuclear power and to consider Japan's future energy situation. We

should take this opportunity to prepare to change Japan's energy policy while looking back on the country's history of nuclear power.

Japan's first commercial nuclear power station began operations in 1966. Japan's first light-water nuclear reactor for commercial use transmitted power to the site of the opening ceremony for Expo 1970 in Osaka Prefecture. The number of nuclear reactors in the country has since steadily increased and reached 55 in 2006.

Over that period, however, the world has witnessed serious nuclear accidents -- the Three Mile Island accident in 1979 and the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. A critical nuclear accident at a nuclear fuel processing plant in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, in 1999 and the Niigata Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake in 2007 that hit an area where a nuclear plant is located sounded an alarm about the risks of earthquakes and radiation.

Nevertheless, Japan did not change its dependence on nuclear energy. Far from it, there were moves to avoid a situation in which none of Japan's nuclear reactors would be in operation after the outbreak of the crisis at the tsunami-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Despite such moves, all of Japan's nuclear reactors have been suspended, highlighting the public's strong will.

As many as 70 percent of respondents to an opinion poll that the Mainichi Shimbun conducted in September last year called for a quick or gradual decrease in the number of nuclear plants. **The government must not ignore the public's hope to break Japan's dependence on nuclear plants.**

In the short term, Japan may face tough choices between the risks of power shortages and those of nuclear accidents.

However, the government has announced that Japan will pursue a society without nuclear power stations under its policy of decreasing Japan's reliance on nuclear power and decommissioning nuclear reactors that have been in operation for 40 years. Therefore, the government should take this opportunity to map out a strategy of finding a way out of its reliance on nuclear power.

First, the government should show a road map toward decreasing its reliance on nuclear plants. To that end, the government should assess the risks of all nuclear power stations across the country based on new standards that will be worked out by a new nuclear energy regulatory body. It should assess risks involving the location such as a fault fracture zone recently found just below the Tsuruga Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture, and decommission dangerous plants.

Funds and human resources used for the construction of new nuclear plants and the nuclear fuel recycle project should be diverted to the disposal of spent nuclear fuel and the decommissioning of reactors so that Japan can lead the world in the nuclear reactor dismantling business.

All countries that have introduced nuclear plants face problems involving the disposal of radioactive waste with no exception. This is a technological and political challenge that most countries that possess such power stations have failed to tackle without future prospects. Whether Japan can take the lead in working on the matter is of great significance to the international community.

The government is required to map out an energy policy that will not adversely affect people's daily lives and industrial activity to prepare for a society without nuclear power stations. To that end, saving energy is indispensable.

In particular, it is essential to substantially reduce electric power consumption during periods of peak demand for electricity. If power consumption over several hours in the afternoons of summer -- when air conditioners are in full operation -- is regulated, it will produce a leeway in energy supply and demand, making it unnecessary for utilities to invest a massive amount of funds in plants and equipment.

It is an urgent task to introduce a fare structure that will encourage consumers to save electric power during hours of peak demand and a system under which utilities would buy saved power, as well as to spread so-called smart meters to allow consumers to check their power consumption and rates at all times.

It has been long believed that nuclear plants contribute to the energy security policy because their fuel is less expensive, it emits little carbon dioxide, and uranium used as fuel can be stockpiled for many years. What have been regarded as advantages of nuclear power should be taken into account in considering new power sources even though questions have been raised over these advantages.

The introduction of renewable energy such as solar, wind and geothermal power is an urgent task from the viewpoint of preventing global warming and contributing to energy security. **A key to the introduction of such eco-friendly energy is a system under which utilities buy electric power generated with such energy sources at fixed prices.** The government is scheduled to introduce this system in July.

The prices at which utilities are required to buy such power, which has been recently released by an expert government panel, will allow the businesses to make profits from buying environment-friendly energy and is expected to help spread renewable energy. It will also result in an increase in electricity rates for each family by 70 to 100 yen a month, according to an estimate made by the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry.

As the amount of renewable energy rises, it will increase the burden on consumers and businesses, and could adversely affect the domestic industry's international competitiveness. In Germany, a developed country in the spread of renewable energy, power suppliers were forced to lower their charges this spring in response to protests from the public. It is important to pursue **a well-balanced fare structure while trying to win the public's understanding.**

To reduce the prices of renewable energy, it is essential to ease regulations that are responsible for high costs. In April, the Cabinet of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda approved 103-point deregulation measures, such as lifting a ban on the construction of geothermal power generators on the premises of national parks. It should promptly implement these steps.

Still, it will take a long time before renewable energy is widespread. Japan has no choice but to rely heavily on thermal power for the time being. Utilities are urged to introduce thermal power generators using natural gas, which emits a relatively low amount of carbon dioxide, as well as combined cycle power generators.

It is necessary to spur competition between power suppliers in order to lower electricity fares. The government has come under mounting pressure to completely liberalize the wholesale selling of electric power and abolish power suppliers' regional monopoly.

Offline nuke reactors still dangerous

May 8, 2012

News Navigator: What danger is still posed by offline nuclear reactors?

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120508p2a00m0na002000c.html>

As of May 5, all nuclear reactors in Japan were offline. The Mainichi answers common questions readers may have about the safety and dangers of offline nuclear plants.

Question: With the reactors offline, has the danger of nuclear accidents disappeared?

Answer: The danger is likely less than while the reactors are running, but it still exists. Nuclear plants make power by turning turbines with the heat from the chained fission of Uranium-235 in nuclear fuel. This chained fission is stopped in an offline reactor, but fuel rods continue to release "decay heat" as

various unstable nuclei created during the reactors' operation until now naturally break down. This decay heat has to continually be removed.

Q: What will happen if it is not removed?

A: A situation like the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster could happen. In the case of the Fukushima disaster, the No. 1 through 3 reactors were shut down due to the vibrations of the earthquake. The tsunami that followed cut off all the plant's power and ability to inject water into its reactors, preventing the removal of decay heat and causing the water in the reactors to boil and gradually evaporate. This led to the fuel rods being exposed, which heated up and led to a meltdown, producing hydrogen gas that exploded. The nuclear fuel of the No. 4 reactor had all been moved to the spent fuel pool on the housing unit's top floor due to a regular reactor inspection, but water could not be injected there either, so this fuel also fell into a dangerous state.

Q: How hot is decay heat?

A: Over a year has passed since the No. 1 through 3 reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 plant were stopped, and the heat has dropped to around 0.4 percent of what it was immediately after the shutdown. Still, the heat is at around 500 kilowatts, enough to boil around five cubic meters (5,000 liters) of 20 degree Celsius water in an hour. It is for this reason that currently the Tokyo Electric Power Co. is injecting six to nine cubic meters of water into each reactor per hour. It is said that used nuclear fuel normally must be kept in water for around two years before it is sufficiently cooled down. Many of the nuclear reactors offline now are in the middle of regular inspections, so much of the nuclear fuel has been moved to spent fuel pools, but if cooling there stops then the same thing that happened at the Fukushima No. 1 plant could occur.

The danger of nuclear fuel in such pools was not recognized much before the Fukushima disaster. Commissioner William Magwood of the United States' Nuclear Regulatory Commission has commented that no one thought the pools would bring about danger.

Q: What safety measures have been taken against frequent earthquakes?

A: On instruction from the government, power companies have taken emergency safety measures such as setting up more power-supplying vehicles on high ground so that if a tsunami like the one that hit after the Great East Japan Earthquake strikes and takes out a nuclear plant's power, they can still cool the reactors and spent fuel pools. (Answers by Taku Nishikawa, Science & Environment News Department)

A majority against restarting Oi reactors and "can endure" restrictions

May 8, 2012

63% of Japanese citizens say 'no' to restarting of Oi nuclear reactors: Mainichi poll

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120508p2a00m0na014000c.html>

Sixty-three percent of Japanese people stand against reactivating two idled reactors at the Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture, and 74 percent say they "can endure" restricted use of electricity in the summer, a nationwide survey conducted by the Mainichi shows, suggesting that the general public is becoming increasingly in favor of breaking away from nuclear power generation.

The survey, conducted on May 5 and 6, shows only 31 percent of people agreeing to restart the No. 3 and 4 reactors that have been offline for regular inspections at the Oi nuclear power station. Seventy-four percent, or nearly three in four Japanese, polled say they "can endure" restrictions, if imposed, on the use of electricity during the summer due to no power supply from nuclear reactors in the country.

The survey also shows 77 percent of people say they "do not trust" new safety standards the government compiled in April in a bid to seek consent from local residents and governments on the reactivation of the idled reactors. Only 16 percent of people say they "trust" the new nuclear safety standards, underscoring the fact that public distrust in the government's procedures has led people to firmly stand against the reactivation of the nuclear reactors.

Looking at public awareness of potential restricted use of electricity in the upcoming summer by regions, the survey shows 61 percent of people in the Kinki region, which is expected to face the most serious power shortage, say they "can endure" such restrictions. Seventy-nine percent of people in the Kanto region, which took sweeping energy-saving measures last summer, also say they can put up with restricted use of power. Meanwhile, more than 70 percent of people polled elsewhere in the country say they can live with such restrictions.

Public support for the Cabinet of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, meanwhile, dropped 1 point to 27 percent from a previous survey conducted in April. Support for the Noda Cabinet has steadily been declining over the past several months. The disapproval rating for the Noda Cabinet rose 2 points to 50 percent from the previous survey. This is the first time the disapproval rating for the current Cabinet has topped the 50 percent level since Noda took office in September last year.

People in some parts of Fukushima Prefecture, including those areas designated as evacuation zones in the wake of the outbreak of the crisis at the Fukushima nuclear plant, were not subject to the Mainichi survey.

323 000 in favor of a referendum

May 11, 2012

Citizens' group seeks referendum on restart of nuclear reactors

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120511p2g00m0dm011000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A citizens' group said Thursday it has collected around 323,000 signatures in favor of a referendum to determine whether nuclear reactors in Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s service area should be restarted.

The group, Let's Decide Together/Citizen-Initiated National Referendum on Nuclear Power, submitted the signatures to the Tokyo metropolitan government, and the metropolitan assembly is expected to hold a vote on adopting an ordinance for the proposed referendum in June.

Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara has indicated his opposition to the adoption of such an ordinance.

The proposal from the group calls for Tokyo residents aged 16 or older, including permanent foreign residents, to vote in the referendum to decide whether nuclear reactors in Tokyo Electric's service area should be reactivated.

The Tokyo governor and the metropolitan assembly would be required to urge the central government and Tokyo Electric to respect the referendum result, according to the proposal.

Tokyo Electric is the operator of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi complex.

Take action!

http://www.avaaz.org/en/un_for_fukushima_daiichi/?vl

Posted: 8 May 2012

Experts have warned that **a pool of dangerous radioactive cesium -- 10 times that of the Chernobyl disaster -- still sits exposed at Fukushima Daiichi** reactor #4. With the Japanese government failing to act, it's time for us to call for an international intervention.

If this pool were to leak, **it could cause a radioactive fire forcing the evacuation of 35 million people in Tokyo!** Now 72 civil society groups and experts are calling for a UN-led independent assessment team - with no ties to the dirty nuclear industry -- to help ensure our safety. A massive jolt of people-power can help thrust the UN into action.

Let's make sure we don't live through another Fukushima disaster. **Call on Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to address this urgent emergency immediately.** Sign the petition now and forward this to everyone you know. We'll deliver it straight to the UN headquarters in New York when we reach 50,000 signatures.

Kenzaburo Oe and nukes

Novelist Oe submits anti-nuclear petition to govt.

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120615_26.html

Nobel Prize-winning Japanese novelist Kenzaburo Oe has asked Japan's government to end its policy of dependence on nuclear power.

Oe and 3 others handed an anti-nuclear power petition to Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura in Tokyo on Friday. The petition was signed by nearly 6.5 million people across the country.

Oe told Fujimura that he opposes the government's plan to allow a restart of the Ohi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, western Japan.

The plant is to be the first to resume operation since all of Japan's 50 reactors were shut down after the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in March last year.

Oe also urged the government to stop building nuclear plants and scrap existing ones.

He told reporters that the Fukushima accident has shown that people cannot coexist with nuclear plants.

He also said adults are responsible for opposing the restart, to maintain a healthy environment for children.

Oe and his fellow campaigners plan to hold an anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo on July 16th. 100,000 people are expected to attend.

Letter of protest

Letter of protest to be addressed to the Japanese government.
see Beyond Nuclear : www.beyondnuclear.org

or Sortir du nucléaire, (the French coalition of anti-nukes groups)
<http://www.sortirdunucleaire.org/>

Letter of Protest

To: Mr. Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan

***“Shame on you, Mr. Noda – listen to your people and act responsibly – Don’t restart Ohi reactors –
Come up with a responsible energy policy based on conservation and renewable energy”***

Dear Prime Minister,

We protest your decision to restart two nuclear power reactors in the town of Ohi in Fukui Prefecture. We ask you to reconsider and instead impose a moratorium on nuclear power in Japan. We ask you to come up with a responsible energy policy for a Japan without nuclear power and based on energy conservation and renewable energies.

Here are our reasons:

- 1 Your decision is undemocratic. The Japanese public is not supporting you. Many members and parliamentarians of your own party are not standing with you.
- 2 The full truth about the meltdown of the three reactors in Fukushima has not been established, yet.
- 3 The prevailing, temporary safety standards that have been applied by the stress tests and that you referred to when you declared the Ohi reactors to be safe, are insufficient. At present, essential safety measures that are required by the stress tests have not yet been implemented in Ohi. It is not verified whether the reactors can be shut down safely if a serious earthquake were to occur.
- 4 Any new regime of safety standards must be formulated and overseen by a truly independent Nuclear Safety Agency. This agency has not yet been established, and parliamentary procedures have just been started.

5 The sharp increase in seismic activities in Japan since the earthquake and tsunami catastrophe of March 11 is alarming. The fact that there are active fault lines in the vicinity of the Ohi reactors, and perhaps even under the site is a major reason of concern.

You may reject this letter as an outside interference into the internal affairs of Japan. However, we know since Chernobyl and Fukushima that the fallout of nuclear accidents does not know national borders, but severely impacts the global environment and bears unknown risks to the health of all mankind. We believe it is our moral obligations to voice our concerns to you.

We also know that our concerns are shared by many people in your country and that a majority of your people does not agree with you. We have high respect for the people of Japan, for their sense of community and service in times of great harm. We believe in their creativity and strong will to overcome these difficult times, and to rebuild a Japan without nuclear power.

We, therefore, ask you to kindly reconsider the restart of the Ohi reactors and to declare a moratorium on nuclear power. We ask you to come up with a responsible energy policy for a Japan without nuclear power based on energy conservation and renewable energies.

Let's think ahead

June 18, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120618p2a00m0na012000c.html>

Editorial: Don't reverse policy toward less reliance on nuclear plants



Protesters standing in the rain chant slogans against the restart of the Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture, in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo on June 16. (Mainichi)

Despite its decision to allow Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO) to reactivate two idled reactors at the Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture, the government should not reverse its policy of cutting down on Japan's reliance on nuclear power.

In a meeting with Cabinet ministers concerned, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda officially decided to allow Osaka-based KEPCO to resume operations at the No. 3 and 4 reactors at the plant that had been suspended for regular inspections.

Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa was quoted as telling Noda prior to the meeting of those Cabinet members, "We agree to the reactivation of the reactors in order to contribute to the stability of people's livelihoods and industries in Kansai, a major electric power consuming region."

It will be the first time since the outbreak of the disaster at the tsunami-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant in March 2011 for nuclear reactors suspended for regular inspections to be reactivated, putting an end to the situation in which no nuclear reactor in Japan is in operation.

However, members of the general public are apparently worried about the government's decision and harbor distrust.

Learning lessons from the Fukushima nuclear crisis, the government has declared that Japan will decrease its dependence on atomic power. However, even though 15 months have passed since the crisis was triggered by the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, the government has failed

to show any clear vision for its nuclear energy policy, such as its overall energy policy and how to position nuclear power in it. It has delayed a decision on specific measures to respond to serious nuclear accidents.

Under these circumstances, it is totally unacceptable for the government to reactivate nuclear reactors without in-depth debate on the issue.

Touching on an anticipated surge in the demand for electricity in summer, Prime Minister Noda told a news conference on June 8, "We'll take measures to minimize the impact on people's daily lives. Japanese society can't do without atomic power stations."

He also denied that operations at the Oi nuclear power plant will be limited to summer. "We can't protect people's livelihoods if nuclear plants are allowed to be in operation only in summer."

The government's Energy and Environment Council will map out Japan's new energy strategy sometime around this August. Before approving the strategy, the government is supposed to clearly show options, such as a review of the nuclear energy policy and global warming countermeasures, for national debate.

The prime minister's remarks, which could be interpreted as suggestions that the government will promote nuclear power ahead of alternative options, should be criticized as making light of such national debate. The new energy strategy must not reverse the government's policy of relying less on nuclear power. The energy industry and other businesses can strategically respond to the new policy only if the government clearly shows its stance to lower Japan's dependence on nuclear plants.

Prime Minister Noda said the safety of nuclear plants is effectively guaranteed, referring to the reactivation of the idled reactors. We call this "a relapse to the safety myth" of nuclear power stations.

The government worked out safety standards for the resumption of operations at idled nuclear reactors in April. The standards, based on emergency countermeasures following the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear crisis and the primary evaluation of safety assessments called "stress tests," call for countermeasures only against earthquakes and tsunami as large as the March 11, 2011 disasters. Moreover, the standards give nuclear plant operators a grace period for building quake-resistant buildings on the premises of such power stations that will serve as a base for a response to accidents.

International safety standards for nuclear power plants call for "defense in depth," including measures to prevent damage from accidents beyond the scope of assumptions and to protect the safety of residents near such power stations. However, Japan's current nuclear plant safety measures do not meet international standards. The executive and legislative branches of accident investigation panels have not

completed their investigations into the Fukushima crisis, which should be reflected in safety measures. Therefore, the prime minister has admitted that the current safety standards are only provisional.

The government is set to merge the Nuclear Safety Commission and the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) into a "nuclear power regulatory commission" by September, and the new panel will work out new safety standards. The standards are expected to come into force sometime around summer 2013. The new standards should apply to reactivation of nuclear reactors other than Oi, and as the governments of Shiga and Kyoto prefectures that neighbor Fukui demand, operations at Oi's No. 3 and 4 reactors should be limited to summer when the consumption of electric power surges.

NISA has instructed electric power companies to re-examine faults situated around their nuclear plants following the finding that a fault in Fukushima Prefecture, which had been believed to be stable, actually moved as a result of aftershocks following the Great East Japan Earthquake.

There is a "fracture zone," a kind of fault, just below the Oi plant. Some experts have warned that the fault is posing a danger to the plant even though NISA denies it. The new regulatory panel will be required to review the established evaluations of faults around nuclear power stations across the country.

Noda held the news conference because Fukui Gov. Nishikawa urged the prime minister to appeal to the public that nuclear power plants are important for Japan and that the Oi plant needs to be reactivated.

Fukui Prefecture is home to 13 commercial nuclear reactors -- 11 operated by KEPCO including Oi's No. 3 and 4 plants, and two run by Japan Atomic Power Co. -- as well as the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor. If Japan steadily decreases its dependence on nuclear power, it will have a serious impact on the regional economy. Gov. Nishikawa took advantage of an anticipated power shortage in summer to draw such bold remarks from the prime minister.

However, the Fukushima nuclear crisis has reminded us that once an accident occurs at a nuclear power station, it will cause damage across prefectural borders and adversely affect all of Japan. It is essential for both electric power supplying and consuming regions to cooperate in seeking specific ways to slash Japan's reliance on nuclear power and vitalize the regional economy.

Even if operations at Oi's No. 3 and 4 reactors are resumed, electric power will still be in short supply mainly in KEPCO's service area. The government should not relax its energy-saving policy. The serious electric power shortage in the wake of the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear crisis has reminded members of the public of the need to save electric power, and prompted businesses to take various measures to reduce their power consumption. Now is a good opportunity to speed up the transformation of Japan into an energy-saving society.

According to an opinion poll that the Mainichi Shimbun conducted on June 2 and 3, 71 percent of respondents said the government does not need to rush to reactivate Oi's No. 3 and 4 reactors. When asked if the pollees can tolerate the situation if the reactors cannot be reactivated by summer and their electricity consumption at their homes and workplaces is restricted, 77 percent answered in the affirmative, far above 19 percent who said they cannot.

So-called "negawatt power" transactions, in which power suppliers pay fees depending on the amounts of power saved, and the expansion of power interchanges between utilities should be promoted regardless of whether Japan should cut back on its reliance on atomic power. These measures will help overcome a possible shortage of electricity and reduce a surplus in electric power generation facilities. Consumers are also urged to review their lifestyles in an effort to reduce their electric power consumption in summer. We can strive a step closer to a society without nuclear power stations by experiencing a power shortage in summer and overcoming it.

"Untenable as a policy"

June 17, 2012

Regrettable 'go' on reactors

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/print/ed20120617a1.html>

The government on Saturday finally gave the go-ahead to Kansai Electric Power Co.'s plan to restart the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at its Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture. **The decision ignores the crucial lesson from the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant: Building and operating nuclear power plants in this quake-prone country, which could cause a catastrophe with irreparable damage, is untenable as a policy.**

Regrettably the government made the decision even without presenting a concrete road map to eventually make Japan free from nuclear power. The decision this time will dampen people's efforts to save power. Economically it will be sound for Japan to push green energy industry to create new technologies and jobs and to disperse small-scale power plants using renewable energy sources across the nation.

It is deplorable that although both the government and Kepco were aware for a long time of the possibility that the areas serviced by Kepco will face power shortages this coming summer, they did not make preparations in advance to overcome the expected shortages without relying on nuclear power. It is not far-fetched to say that while not making such preparations, the government and Kepco roused a fear about power shortage and used it as an excuse to restart the Oi reactors. Attention must be paid to the fact that the government has ruled out limiting the operation of the Oi reactors to the coming summer as a means of tiding over large demand for power mainly due to use of air-conditioners.

It is not unreasonable to suspect that the government and the power industry are aiming to use the Oi restart as the first step to carry out full-scale restart of all the reactors that are now offline without making a concrete plan to abolish nuclear power generation in Japan.

Clearly the safety measures taken for the Oi plant are inadequate. It will take three years for Kepco to install filters to remove radioactive substances in case such substances have to be vented from reactor cores during an emergency.

It will also take three years for Kepco to install a seismically isolated emergency command center. In addition, neither the government nor Kepco has worked out a concrete plan to evacuate people in case a severe accident occurs at the Oi plant.

On June 8, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said even if a quake and a tsunami as strong as those that hit Fukushima No. 1 occurred, an accident can be prevented and that it is ensured that even loss of all power sources will not lead to damage a reactor core.

How many people will believe his assurance?

US demonstrators protest restart of Japanese reactors

June 19, 2012

Protestors rally in Washington against Japan's nuclear restart

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120619p2g00m0dm099000c.html>

WASHINGTON (Kyodo) -- Antinuclear protestors and conservationists rallied in Washington on Monday against Japan's approval for resuming two idled nuclear reactors, calling for Tokyo to reverse the decision.

The protest in front of the Japanese Embassy in Washington followed similar protests in other countries, including Australia, France, Germany, India, Italy, South Korea and Thailand, according to its organizers.

Holding signs with slogans such as "Don't Nuke the Climate," the protesters presented an embassy official with a petition addressed to Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda along with about 5,500 signatures.

Titus North, a member of an environmental conservation group participating in the rally, said, "We want Japan to show the world that (a nation) can do without nuclear power plants."

The Japanese government on Saturday approved restarting the reactors at the Oi plant in Fukui on the Sea of Japan coast, the first to come back on line since all reactors in Japan were idled amid concern about their safety following last year's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant crisis.

Antinuke protests

June 23, 2012

Oi prompts domestic, U.S. antinuclear rallies

Kyodo

Saturday, June 23, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120623x1.html#.T-XlA5HnP0c>

Tens of thousands of demonstrators held antinuclear energy rallies in Tokyo, Osaka and U.S. cities Friday over the government's decision to restart the first idled reactors since the Fukushima No. 1 meltdown.

Fukushima Prefecture residents also staged events on the sidelines of a U.N. Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, joining citizens' groups at home and abroad calling for a nuclear-free world.

In a further development, a group in Niigata Prefecture on Saturday began collecting signatures for an ordinance to hold a referendum on whether to allow a restart of Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant, the world's largest atomic energy complex.

Organizers of a demonstration in Tokyo outside the prime minister's office said an estimated 45,000 people gathered Friday evening to protest the government's decision to authorize the restart of two reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Brandishing placards and banners reading "Stop Oi" and "Don't Accept Nuclear Power," the crowd vented its anger over the state's green light to fire up the two units.

"The government's decision (to reactivate the Oi reactors) is folly. We should not leave it to the next generation to solve the energy issue," said a 42-year-old woman from Kofu, Yamanashi Prefecture, who went to the event with her children.

The rallies, which have been held on a weekly basis since March, have been growing in size with more and more people apparently learning of them via Twitter messages. The organizers said they plan to stage another protest Friday in front of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda's office in Chiyoda Ward.

Also Friday evening, around 1,500 demonstrators gathered outside Kansai Electric's head office in Kita Ward, Osaka, to denounce the Oi reactor restart.

"They are trying to scare us by saying power supplies may run out even if the reactors are restarted," one protester, a 34-year-old company employee, said in reference to the government's regional power-rationing targets.

Keiko Yukimoto, a 34-year-old homemaker from Hirakata in Osaka Prefecture who attended the rally with her 4-year-old son, voiced her disapproval over the Oi restart decision. "I think a reactivation is premature," she said.

One of the protest organizers in Osaka said many people started turning up at the rallies, which have been held almost every Friday since April, after reading tweets urging them to participate.

In the United States, antinuclear protesters delivered a letter addressed to the prime minister opposing the Oi facility's restart to the Japanese Consulate General in Los Angeles.

"Your decision is undemocratic. It is clear even from the United States that the Japanese public is not supporting you," the letter warns Noda. "You may reject this letter as outside interference. . . . However, the fallout of nuclear accidents does not know national borders (and) severely impacts the global environment."

Around three dozen people protested outside the consulate, including some residents from near California's San Onofre nuclear plant, which has been idled since a steam generator leaked radioactive water in January.

"The only difference between us and Japan is they got the earthquake before we did," said activist Gene Stone, 58, who lives about 20 km from the idled plant.

Similar protests were held Friday on the West Coast at Japan's consulates in San Francisco and Portland, Oregon.

In Rio de Janeiro, seven visiting residents from Fukushima Prefecture gave talks at antinuclear events near the U.N. conference venue, with each event drawing 10 to 50 listeners.

About 20 protesters from nongovernmental organizations in Japan and other countries disrupted proceedings on the final day of the so-called Rio+20 meeting Friday, shouting antinuclear slogans at conference participants.

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No to Oi restart

June 23, 2012

Thousands protest against Oi nuclear plant restart in Tokyo

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120623p2a00m0na005000c.html>

Thousands of people gathered in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo on June 22 in a protest against the reactivation of the Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Organizers of the protest, which lasted about two hours, said some 45,000 people took part.

"No to reactivation!" the protestors chanted repeatedly as they occupied about 700 meters of walkways and pavements around the Prime Minister's Office in the Nagatacho district.



Participants of a rally chant messages of protest against the reactivation of the Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture, in front of the Prime Minister's Office (seen in the background) in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on the evening of June 22. (Mainichi)

"I learned about today's activity via Facebook," said a 32-year-old company employee visiting from Tsuchiura, Ibaraki Prefecture. "I'm appalled at (the government's decision on) restarting the nuclear reactors while the method to dispose of nuclear waste hasn't been determined." He said he joined the protest after deciding he shouldn't remain silent.

The anti-nuclear rally was initiated by the citizens network "Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes" (Shutoken Hangenpatsu Rengo). When the group started its series of protests in March, there were around 300 people taking part, but the number of participants has since steadily grown, according to group members.

The Metropolitan Police Department put the number of demonstrators at the rally at some 11,000.
(Related link)

Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes: <http://coalitionagainstnukes.jp/>

Oi prompts domestic, U.S. antinuclear rallies

Kyodo

Saturday, June 23, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120623x1.html#.T-XIA5HnP0c>

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Yamaguchi governor won't extend permit

Yamaguchi Prefecture to stop nuclear plant project

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120625_24.html

The governor of Yamaguchi Prefecture in western Japan says he won't extend a permit for a land reclamation project to build a nuclear power plant.

Governor Sekinari Nii made the remark at a prefectural assembly on Monday. He was referring to the planned construction of the Kaminoseki plant on the coast of the Seto Inland Sea.

Chugoku Electric Power Company wants to build the facility in Kaminoseki Town. But it suspended the reclamation work after last year's accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

The current license given to the utility for the reclamation will expire in October.

Nii said the central government is currently reviewing the country's energy policy and that makes the future of the Kaminoseki plant unclear.

He added there is no just reason to extend the permit unless new safety standards for nuclear reactors are put in place.

Once the current permit expires, Chugoku Electric will have to make a fresh application that meets new safety standards to continue the project.

Shika plant not quake-resistant

June 26, 2012

Local residents file suit against Hokuriku Electric, demand Shika nuke plant be halted

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120626p2a00m0na009000c.html>

KANAZAWA -- One hundred and twenty local residents filed a lawsuit with the Kanazawa District Court against Hokuriku Electric Power Co. on June 26, demanding the utility stop operating the Shika Nuclear Power Plant, which they say is not fully resistant to major earthquakes.

In the suit, the local residents from Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures said, "The present quake-resistance guidelines for the nuclear power plant have serious flaws." They argued that the nuclear power station was not built on the assumption that multiple active faults near the nuclear plant could work together and the utility does not take into account an assessment made by experts that the "Togikawa-nangan fault" immediately next to the nuclear plant is an active fault.

Moreover, in light of the recorded history of earthquakes, they say that the nuclear power station must be built in such a way as to withstand magnitude-7.3 earthquakes, but the utility assumes earthquakes of only up to magnitude 6.8. The plaintiffs also say, "Risks are emerging of a severe accident occurring (like what happened at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant).

Hokuriku Electric declined to comment, saying it had not received the suit.

With respect to lawsuits over operations of the Shika Nuclear Power Plant, the Kanazawa District Court ruled in March 2006 in favor of a suit demanding operations at the No. 2 reactor be halted. It was the only commercial nuclear reactor in Japan a court accepted a lawsuit against. In March 2009, however, the Kanazawa branch of the Nagoya High Court overturned the lower court ruling. And in October 2010, the Supreme Court dismissed the plaintiffs' appeal, ending the court battle over the nuclear reactor at the Shika Nuclear Power Plant.

Friday protesters in Tokyo

For the photos of the demonstration see for instance the page on the "Revolution des hortensias" on the Blog de Fukushima

June 29, 2012

Protests over nuclear plant restart continue

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120629_35.html

A crowd rallied in front of the Prime Minister's Official Residence in Tokyo on Friday to protest the restart a nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture, central Japan.

Protesters have been gathering every Friday since late March. Their activities are organized by a coalition of anti-nuclear groups in and around Tokyo.

The organizers say more and more people are getting in on the action through social media and word of mouth.

A cross-section of Tokyo residents formed a line several hundred meters long.

Protesters held up signs demanding the government retract its decision to restart the Ohi reactors.

The reactors were shut down 15 months ago for maintenance. One placard read "No more Fukushimas."

A 57-year-old man said he joined the protest for the first time when he learned about it on Twitter. He said the government's handling of the re-start lacks transparency and that it should review the way nuclear power plants are operated.

A 40-year-old woman was with her son and mother. She said she was at first reluctant to take part in the protest, but wanted to protect her children from radiation fears.

M.Noda, listen to the people's voices

Even Noda startled by size of anti-nuclear protest outside his office

June 30, 2012

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201206300021

Thousands rallied outside the prime minister's office in Tokyo's Nagatacho district to protest the government's decision to restart two reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The No. 3 and No. 4 reactors, operated by Kansai Electric Power Co., had been shut down for regular maintenance inspections. The No. 3 reactor is due to go back online on July 1.

Similar protest rallies were held across the country, including Osaka, which is served by Kansai Electric.

Many people joined the rally in Tokyo on June 29 in response to calls on Twitter. Holding banners and placards, the crowd filled the sidewalk on the way to the prime minister's office.

Organizers said the crowd numbered 150,000 to 180,000, but Tokyo police estimated it at 17,000 strong. "Make an honorable withdrawal from nuclear power generation," one protester shouted.

“Listen to the people’s voices,” said another.

Protesters, shouting until they were hoarse, called on the government to unequivocally abandon nuclear power generation.

Protests outside the prime minister’s office have been a weekly occurrence since March. That event initially attracted only 300 or so people.

The number of people attending the rallies, held mainly on Fridays, has grown over time as a result of calls on Twitter and other social networking sites.

According to organizers, about 45,000 people attended the June 22 rally. The latest rally far outnumbered that figure, they said.

Chants of “Saikado hantai!” (We oppose the restart of the reactors) filled the street from 6 p.m.

People from all walks of life--homemakers with children, middle aged businessmen and the elderly--came over to join the demonstration until the crowd was spilling out onto the street.

A 36-year-old woman from Tokyo’s Adachi Ward, who came with her two sons, aged 7 and 3, said it was the first time she had attended the weekly rally.

“The government never cares about our lives,” she said. “I have been a silent observer so far, but I cannot stand aside any longer.”

In Osaka, an estimated 2,200 protesters gathered in front of Kansai Electric’s head office in Kita Ward, according to organizers.

Citizens’ rallies against the reactor restarts were also held in Nagoya, Nagasaki, Kumamoto and elsewhere.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda seemed to be taken aback by the noisy chanting as he left his office for the nearby official residence around 7 p.m.

At one point, he turned his head in the direction of the chanting, telling a police officer who was guarding him, "It is such a huge sound."

Noda then continued on without pausing.

(This article was written by Takuya Sumikawa and Akiko Tada.)
THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Thousands rally in front of PM's office to protest Oi nuke reactor restart



Thousands of people rally in front of Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on June 29 to protest the July 1 restart of the Oi Nuclear Power Plant. (Mainichi)

拡大写真

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120630p2a00m0na015000c.html>

Thousands of people rallied outside the Prime Minister's Office on June 29 against the impending restart of the Oi nuclear plant.

Despite the size of the gathering, however, the crowd was peaceful and orderly, with protesters including parents with their children chanting, "No to nuke plant restarts."

The administration of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has approved the restart of two reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture operated by Kansai Electric Power Co., and they are set to go back online on July 1.

As crowds began gathering from around 4 p.m., one could see a great variety of protesters -- some came with placards reading, "Absolutely no restart," while others simply came with their families. There were elderly protesters and others in business suits who had come straight from their offices.

"I've never joined a demonstration before, but I can no longer be indifferent," said Hideyuki Tanaka, 38, a resident of Saitama Prefecture, who joined the rally on his way home from work. "(The protest) didn't seem to be of a political character, so I wasn't reluctant to join in."

Satomi Nakata, 44, a resident of Shizuoka Prefecture taking part in a protest for the first time, joined the rally with her three children aged 6 to 15. "I learned on the Internet that the protest would be peaceful, so I came with my kids," she said. "All protesters here are simply trying to say that they want a normal life and that they want to protect their children. I share the exact same feelings."

The demonstration, organized by the civic antinuclear group Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes via major social networking websites, was the latest in a series of protests held near the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo's Nagatacho district over the past few months. The first demonstration, held prior to the government's initial April 3 debate on the restart of the Oi plant, drew only about 300 people. The number of demonstrators, however, has increased drastically, with organizers announcing more than 10,000 people had joined a protest on June 15 -- the day before the government announced its final decision on the restart of the Oi nuclear plant.

Organizers' estimates put the June 29 rally at some 200,000 people, though police placed the figure at closer to 17,000.

One organizer going by the name Misao Redwolf said the coalition has worked hard to disassociate the rally from the violent image many associate with public protests, and mount the kind of demonstration that anyone can feel comfortable attending.

At around 6 p.m. the rally began heating up with constant chants of, "No to nuke plant restarts." An hour later, the crowd had swelled significantly, bursting onto the road in front of the Prime Minister's Office.

Police cars flooded the area as well, and the demonstration -- initially planned to run until 8 p.m. -- wrapped up 15 minutes early.

"An accident here will not stop the nuclear plant," Redwolf said through a microphone, urging protesters to calmly return to their homes.

Shortly before 7 p.m., Prime Minister Noda returned to his official residence next to his office. He was quoted by sources as telling his bodyguard that "it's quite loud," referring to the demonstrators' shouts, clearly audible even inside the residence.

Meanwhile, another rally opposing the reactivation of the Oi plant was held in Osaka's Kita Ward in front of Kansai Electric's headquarters on the same day. According to organizers, about 2,200 people joined the demonstration

Protestors at Oi nuclear plant

July 1, 2012

Antinuclear protesters block road to Oi plant ahead of restart

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120701p2g00m0dm016000c.html>

TSURUGA (Kyodo) -- A group of about 100 antinuclear protesters on Saturday blocked a road outside the front gate of the Oi nuclear plant in western Japan, ahead of the planned reactivation of a reactor there on Sunday.

The protesters, part of 650 people who took part in a rally against the reactivation, sought to block the entrance to the plant in Fukui Prefecture with more than a dozen vehicles in an attempt to prevent workers from entering the facility.

The group is set to remain at the site until Sunday night when the process of reactivating the No.3 reactor is scheduled to begin. The plant operator, Kansai Electric Co., said the protest will not affect the reactivation process.

Earlier Saturday, the 650 protesters presented an official of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency with a petition addressed to senior vice industry minister Seishu Makino, who is expected to stay near the plant for about a week to monitor the reactivation process until the reactor reaches its full output capacity. The petition urged the immediate halt to the reactivation process.

The Oi plant on the Sea of Japan coast is the first to come back online since all commercial reactors in Japan ceased operating amid concern about their safety following last year's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant disaster.

Protestors gather at Ohi nuclear plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120701_13.html

Protestors are gathering at the Ohi nuclear power plant in central Japan ahead of the restart of one of its reactors on Sunday evening.

Members of groups opposing the first restart of idled reactors in the country began assembling near the plant's gate from Saturday evening.

They are blocking a road leading to the plant, some using vehicles.

Some protestors are holding banners that call for no reactivation. Others shouted slogans and beat drums.

Kansai Electric Power Company says the presence of protestors is making it difficult for workers to enter the site, but that the plant's operations have not been affected.

Anti-nuke protests continue

July 7, 2012

Nuclear protesters fill areas around Prime Minister's Office



Protesters call for the suspension of the Oi nuclear power plant in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward amid the rain on the evening of July 6. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120707p2a00m0na008000c.html>

Tens of thousands of protesters against the restart of the Oi nuclear power plant braved the cold evening rain to fill walkways and pavements around the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo on July 6, demonstrating their continued efforts and unity in calling for a breakaway from nuclear power.

While the anti-nuclear protest has been staged near the premier's office in the Nagatacho district every Friday evening since March, the latest action marked the first since the reactivation of the No. 3 reactor at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture on July 1.

Participants of the rally, which started shortly before 6 p.m. amid the rain, raised placards reading "Abolish nuclear power plants" and chanted such slogans as "No to reactivation" and "Bring our Fukushima back."

Musician Ryuichi Sakamoto joined the protest shortly after 7 p.m., encouraging participants through a microphone, "It will be a long struggle, but let's hold out."

A 42-year-old university lecturer from Tokyo's Bunkyo Ward said he cancelled one of his classes to take part in the rally.

"The processes that the government made toward the reactivation (of the Oi plant) were incoherent. I've rushed here today thinking nothing will be changed if things remain as they are," he said.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a citizens' network that has organized the weekly protest, put the number of participants in the latest rally at some 150,000, while the Metropolitan Police Department said 21,000 people took part.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda tacitly admitted his awareness of the anti-nuclear movement as he answered reporters' questions while leaving his office for his official residence that evening. When a reporter asked him, "Are you facing up to the voices of protest?", the prime minister nodded in silence. When reporters asked if he had anything to say to the protesters, he replied, "We've received many opinions, various opinions."

Anti-nuke protest in Tokyo (2)

July 8, 2012

Tokyo rally condemns Oi N-reactor restart

Jiji Press

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120707002515.htm>

Tokyo on Friday saw another protest against the restart of two reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant, with demonstrators crowding the streets around the prime minister's official residence.

Beating drums and holding placards, participants chanted loudly: "Stop the Oi nuclear plant!" and "No restart!"

Rallies against the resumption of operations at the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi plant have been held in central Tokyo every week since March 29, according to members of the Metropolitan Coalition against Nukes, the event's organizer.

Kansai Electric restarted the No. 3 reactor Sunday, the first nuclear reactor to restart since the March 11, 2011, earthquake began Japan's worst nuclear crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

The reactor is expected to attain full-capacity operations early Monday morning.

Despite the rain, large crowds gathered in front of the prime minister's residence in Nagatacho, Chiyoda Ward.

Film shot on Nagasaki on Sept. 8-9, 1945

July 13, 2012

Film shows Nagasaki soon after A-bomb

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120713f3.html#.UAAS9pFIwpU>

NAGASAKI — The Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum is showing previously unscreened footage taken just a month after the U.S. atomic bombing on Aug. 9, 1945.

Atsuko Shigesawa, a freelance journalist, obtained a DVD of the footage from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration and donated it to the museum, along with two other DVDs with film from other archives, the museum said Tuesday.

The museum started showing it to the public July 4.

The footage, which indicates it was shot in Nagasaki on Sept. 8 and 9, lasts six minutes and shows what appear to be foreign prisoners who had been exposed to radiation from the atomic bomb, with burns on their upper bodies and legs.

It also shows foreigners who were apparently in the city to carry out an investigation. They are seen approaching a building with the letters "PW" on its roof, indicating prisoners of war.

In the latter half of the footage, children can be seen running barefoot on roads cleared of debris, the museum said.

"Other existing films weren't shot until after October 1945, so this footage is precious," said Takashi Matsuo, deputy director of the museum's A-bomb heritage section.

"It shows people drinking tap water or well water, and provides a glimpse of what life was like at that time."

The museum will screen the footage until Sept. 2.

No-nukes group gears up

Kyodo

A major antinuclear group will restate its pledge to work for a world without nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons at its series of annual conventions in Fukushima, Hiroshima and Nagasaki prefectures from July 28 to Aug. 9.

Injuries from the atomic bomb suffered by a man believed to be a foreign prisoner of war are seen. The film came from the U.S. National Archives.



The Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs, known as Gensuikin, said it will hold discussions and seminars focusing on power plants and victims of radiation exposure, as these are real and ongoing issues amid the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

"We have long depended on nuclear power for energy . . . but we will have to change that social structure and our lives," Yasunari Fujimoto, secretary general of Gensuikin, said Tuesday.

Anton Vdovichenko, a leading member of a Russian nongovernmental organization supporting children affected by the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, will be among the foreign guests from the U.S., Germany, South Korea and the Philippines attending the events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

A campaign in Fukushima slated for July 28 will be followed by a conference from Aug. 4 to 6 in Hiroshima and meetings from Aug. 7 to 9 in Nagasaki. The group has been calling for a nuclear-free world based on the World War II atomic bombings.

Massive anti-nuke rally in Tokyo today

July 16, 2012

Antinuclear rally draws 170,000 people at central Tokyo park



Anti-nuclear protesters carry "No nukes" banners during a march in Tokyo, Monday, July 16, 2012. Tens of thousands of people gathered at a Tokyo park, demanding "Sayonara," or goodbye, to nuclear power as Japan prepares to restart yet another reactor, and expressed outrage over a report that blamed culture on the Fukushima disaster. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara)

拡大写真

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120716p2g00m0dm090000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- An anti-nuclear power plant rally called for by a group led by Nobel literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe and other celebrities drew a crowd of around 170,000 people Monday at Tokyo's Yoyogi Park, according to organizers.

At the assembly held under a scorching sun, dubbed "100,000 People's Assembly to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants," journalist Satoshi Kamata said at the opening event, "We want to bring an end to nuclear power plants immediately."

Oe criticized the government's stance of trying to restart nuclear reactors when the Fukushima nuclear crisis has not yet fully been resolved. "I feel we're being insulted by the government" due to the recent rebooting of a reactor, a move he described as "a plot by the government."

The rally, which also featured live musical performances by Japanese singers, was part of the ongoing antinuclear campaign "10 Million People's Action to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants" that has been conducted following the 2011 crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

The organizing group consists of the Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs, commonly known as Gensuikin, and other bodies.

According to the organizers, the event drew not only activists from civic groups but also numerous private citizens concerned about their future. The number of participants in the rally at Yoyogi Park was unparalleled for an event there, they said.



Anti-nuclear energy protesters march on a street in Tokyo Monday, July 16, 2012. Tens of thousands of people gathered at a Tokyo park, demanding "Sayonara," or goodbye, to nuclear power as Japan prepares to restart yet another reactor, and expressed outrage over a report that blamed culture on the Fukushima disaster. (AP Photo/Koji Sasahara)

拡大写真

Kumiko Kobayashi, 59, from Tokyo's Meguro Ward brought her children and granddaughter in participating at an antinuclear protest for the first time. "The first priority is to halt nuclear power plants. I want the government and the general public to have a normal way of thinking and realize that," she said.

A 90-year-old novelist and Buddhist nun, Jakusho Setouchi, said she is skeptical about whether the government will listen to the people's wish to do away with nuclear power. "We nonetheless need to assemble. We're taxpayers. We can and should express our opinions," she said.

Economic commentator Katsuto Uchihashi and journalist Takashi Hirose were among others who spoke at the rally.

The participants took to the streets after the rally, marching about 3 kilometers near the park and chanting such slogans as "We don't need nuclear power plants," and "The government, stop deciding without public consent."

Oe and others have also been collecting signatures from 10 million people as part of the action. As of July 8, around 7.85 million people had offered their signatures and some have already been presented to Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura.

A weekly antinuclear rally has been held every Friday for months in front of the prime minister's residence in Tokyo and has been drawing an increasing number of people. Civic groups staging the event say a June 29 meet drew 200,000 people but the Metropolitan Police Department put the total count at around 17,000.

Massive Tokyo rally decries atomic power

Organizers say 170,000 turned out to demand nuke-free Japan

AFP-Jiji, Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120716x1.html#.UARbiJFIwpU>

Tens of thousands of people rallied Monday in Tokyo demanding an end to nuclear power, the latest in a series of demonstrations to erupt since the triple-meltdown disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

Under scorching sunshine on a national holiday, demonstrators marched through the streets near Yoyogi Park chanting: "Don't resume nuclear power operation. Prime Minister Noda should quit."

Organizers estimated the turnout at 170,000, which would apparently make it the biggest antinuclear rally since last year's quake and tsunami sparked the world's worst atomic disaster in a generation at the poorly protected plant.

Participants included Nobel Prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe and famed musician and composer Ryuichi Sakamoto.

"We are angry because no progress has been made in terms of compensation and decontamination," said Noboru Shikatani, 71, who evacuated from Fukushima to Tokyo amid the disaster.

"We can't accept any resumption of nuclear power operation, as the Fukushima crisis has not been resolved," he said. "We want to bring our voice to many people by joining this kind of demonstration."

Sakamoto said: "We shouldn't put the lives of children who are the future of our country, a beautiful Japan, in potential danger just for such a thing as electricity."

Oe said: "I feel insulted by the government, which reactivated Kansai Electric Power's Oi Nuclear Power Station after the major nuclear power accident happened."

Oe and others are on a petition drive to collect 10 million signatures. As of July 8, around 7.85 million people had signed, and some have already been presented to Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura.

Monday's rally came after unit 3 at the Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture last week became the nation's first reactor to resume full operation, ending Japan's brief departure from atomic power. Kepco is now trying to fire up reactor 4.

All of the nation's commercial nuclear plants were shut down in succession after the Fukushima crisis began, kicking off a nearly two-month hiatus from atomic power and orders for all reactors to undergo stress tests.

Despite the government's tests and safety claims, antinuclear sentiment remains strong and protesters have been turning out by the tens of thousands.

A damning independent Diet report recently said the crisis at Fukushima No. 1 was a man-made disaster, marked by oversight failures, collusion between Tokyo Electric, the government and industry-promoting regulators, and a culture that blindly follows authority.

Atomic power went on hold as Japan mulled its options after the 9.0-magnitude megaquake and tsunami crippled the cooling systems at Fukushima No. 1, leading to three core meltdowns.

But in mid-June, Noda gave the green light to restart two of the units at the Oi plant to prevent summer power shortages.

For critics of atomic power, the move came too soon.

"We want to continue to stage demonstrations as antinuclear sentiment is growing among the people," said Yasunari Fujimoto, an organizer of the rally.

Anti-nuclear rally held in Tokyo

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120716_17.html

Tens of thousands of people have staged one of the biggest anti-nuclear rallies in Tokyo since the Fukushima accident in March, last year.

Labor union activists joined members of the public in the main protest rally at Yoyogi Park on Monday. Many of them responded to calls on the social network Twitter and the Internet.

Nobel prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe was among public figures who called on people to take to the streets.

The rally came after a reactor at the Ohi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture, central Japan, was brought back online. It began operating at full capacity earlier this month.

Oe said the government's move to push forward the re-starting of idled reactors despite wide public opposition is an insult to the people. He added that people must defeat this move.

Organizers say 170,000 people took part in the rally, while police estimate the number at 75,000.

The crowd then marched on to the streets to protest the restart of the reactor and show their opposition to nuclear power.

A woman took part with her son, who is in elementary school. She said she wants the government to scrap nuclear plants immediately for the safety of her child.

A man in his 70s said he joined the rally because the government won't listen to the people. He added that he cannot accept its decision to restart the reactor.

Tokyo antinuclear rally

July 17, 2012

**For more pictures on the Tokyo rally, see
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120717a1.html#.UAVJXpFIwpU>
Crowds gather in Yoyogi Park "for the future"**

July 17, 2012

Giant antinuclear rally in Tokyo draws protesters from all walks of life



Antinuclear protesters fill Tokyo's Yoyogi Park on July 16. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120717p2a00m0na008000c.html>

Tens of thousands of antinuclear protesters -- young and old, families and individuals -- packed Tokyo's Yoyogi Park on July 16 before taking to the streets of the capital with their demands for an end to nuclear power in Japan.

Despite the blazing sun and temperatures well over 30 degrees Celsius, organizers estimated some 170,000 people had turned out, making the antinuclear rally the largest since the meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in March last year. There have been sizeable antinuclear rallies in front of the prime minister's office on Friday evenings since spring this year, but the Yoyogi event outdid them both in size and diversity, with young people and families joining in large numbers.

By 11 a.m. -- two hours before the official start time -- the park was already overflowing, with protesters clogging the surrounding streets. Among them were the Iidas, a family of four from Hachioji in western Tokyo who struggled through the crowd to get to the park. The rally was the first for both parents and their two teenaged daughters.

"We thought that now is the turning point (in the struggle) to rid Japan of nuclear power," the parents commented. "We wanted to be here, at this moment, as a family."

Noon found Naoki Okada and six coworkers from Hiratsuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, in the plaza in front of the main gathering point, holding a red, handmade banner with the words, "No Nukes," and "If we're going

to be rid of them, now's the time." Okada, 38, has joined the weekly Friday antinuclear protests in front of the prime minister's office since they began.

"It took just months for Japan to get to zero operational reactors, so why do we need to restart any?" Okada said. "I wanted to strike now, while everyone's determination not to let this pass is united."

Another protester, a 33-year-old from Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, who came with her two children, also emphasized the impact of coming together as a united force.

"I don't usually have the chance to ask my close friends what they think of nuclear power," she said. "But by coming here I really understood how many people think the same way I do," she added, looking around at the vast crowd.

A 61-year-old man from Kawasaki, meanwhile, told the Mainichi Shimbun that though he'd always thought nuclear power was "frightening," he'd never spoken up about it. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster began, however, he began to regret his silence.

"I can really believe in this, in the power of public feeling to determine what's right," he said as the official rally kicked off just before 1 p.m. "Seeing this sea of people, I really think that Japan can change."

After speeches from famed musician Ryuichi Sakamoto and Nobel Prize for Literature winner Kenzaburo Oe, at about 1:30 p.m. the protesters moved out onto the streets, chanting "We have enough electricity," and "Give back Fukushima."

One 62-year-old civil servant from Tokyo's Mitaka city was among them, one of many there attending an antinuclear rally for the first time.

His idea of what a demonstration is was formed decades before, by the extreme and sometimes violent student protests of the 1960s and '70s. The antinuclear rally, however, "has very few group banners. Demonstrations have changed a lot," he said with deep emotion.

"It feels like the world no longer reflects the thinking of its young people," he observed. "We have to protest to produce change."

Also on the streets was a 32-year-old housewife from Wako, Saitama Prefecture, with her 1-year-old daughter in her arms and 4-year-old son in tow.

"For our children! For the future!" she chanted as she walked.

"A few years ago, I couldn't even imagine that I'd be marching in a protest like this," she said. However, the Fukushima No. 1 plant reactor meltdowns, she felt, had snatched away the safety of her family's food and water, and even places for her children to play. She found out about the July 16 protest via Twitter, and decided she had to take part.

"For anything to change, first of all I have to do something," she said.

One of the protest routes ended at Ebisu Park in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, where a young couple and their baby sat down on a bench to chat after the some 3-kilometer march. They looked happy and satisfied with their summer day spent wrestling with the issue of nuclear power.

Eco Inagi no kai and renewable energy

July 17, 2012

Renewable energy activism surges forward in Tokyo-area city

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120717p2a00m0na009000c.html>

A citizens' movement to help Japan rid itself of nuclear power through local adoption of solar power is building steam in the city of Inagi, Tokyo.

"To help get rid of nuclear power completely, we must make Inagi a leader in renewable energy generation," says Seigo Igaki, the 64-year-old leader of Eco Inagi no kai (Eco-Inagi committee).

The citizens' group is pressing the municipal government to install solar panels on public buildings including the city's 17 elementary and junior high schools, and to help people living in apartment complexes and houses install their own panels.

The group has already seen some success. Formed in October last year to pursue environmental initiatives such as protecting local woodland, the group managed to collect some 3,100 signatures in favor

of installing solar panels on Inagi's primary schools. In March this year, the city council adopted the petition's primary points.

The group's next move has been to put on a "zero nuclear power" exhibition in the central Inagi cultural center lobby, set to run until July 18.

To reach the total electricity conserved under last year's summer power saving target of 15 percent per household "would take just 3,300 of this city's 36,000 households installing solar power systems," Igaki points out. "It's very important for Inagi to slowly replace traditional energy with renewable sources."

Inagi does not yet have a solar panel installation subsidy as some of its municipal neighbors do, and the Eco Inagi group has started a signature campaign to change that. The group isn't stopping at solar, however. It's also pressing the city to invite renewable energy generation companies to set up shop on unused land, and set up miniature hydroelectric generators on local rivers and at water stations.

The group's vigor and urgency is no accident.

"After the Fukushima nuclear disaster, we truly felt how dangerous nuclear power is," says 77-year-old Eco Inagi Secretary-General Goro Ichimura. "An accident can lead to the absolute loss of people's hometowns."

More about the Tokyo rally

July 18, 2012

Massive rally held against nuke power

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T120717004002.htm>

The Yomiuri Shimbun

Tens of thousands of people opposed to nuclear power gathered for a rally--believed to be the largest antinuclear protest since the Fukushima nuclear crisis started in March 2011--at Yoyogi Park in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo, on Monday.

According to the organizer, 170,000 people took part in the protest. The Metropolitan Police Department put the figure at about 75,000.

Calling out, "Protect our children's future," the protesters filled the venue and even spilled out to some nearby streets.

The meeting began just before noon in stifling hot conditions.

Writer Kenzaburo Oe, a core organizer of the event, addressed the crowd through a microphone. "I believe we'll be able to break free from the fear and indignity caused by the existence of nuclear power plants, and to live freely," he said.

Musician Ryuichi Sakamoto said: "We should never jeopardize this beautiful land of Japan and the lives of our children, who are the future of this country, just for the sake of electricity."

After the speeches, the participants split into three groups to march in demonstrations in the Harajuku, Shinjuku and Shibuya areas.

One participant, Setsuo Fujita, who runs a resort inn in Nishigo, Fukushima Prefecture, said his sales had halved since the crisis began at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

"I want Prime Minister [Yoshihiko] Noda to hear what the people here today are saying," said Fujita, 60.

The protest was called "100 thousand People's Rally to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants."

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Noda 'wants to hear' views

After the protest, Noda expressed his willingness to listen to the opinions of groups and protesters seeking an end to Japan's use of nuclear power.

"It's only been a year and four months since the crisis began at TEPCO's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. I believe many people have mixed feelings" toward maintaining nuclear power plants, Noda said on a Fuji TV program Monday. "It has become an issue that has divided public opinion. I'd like to sincerely listen to various opinions on this matter."

Noda insisted the decision to recently resume operations at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture was correct.

"By ensuring the reactors are safe to operate by going through a series of steps since the accident [at the Fukushima plant] and our own judgment, I reached a conclusion on [the resumption] in consideration of the necessity" of an adequate supply of electricity, he said.

The Hydrangea Revolution

Source : Asahi – Japan

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201207190014

Huge changes occurring in protest techniques in Japan

July 19, 2012

By KOTARO KONDO/ Staff Writer

Where "revolution" could once be defined in Japan as something akin to the violent protests in 1960 against the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, today's growing protests against nuclear power are redefining the term.

The protests have been orderly by comparison, attracting **a broad cross-section of protesters**. Their intensity is not waning, with demonstrations held every Friday night in the vicinity of the Prime Minister's Office drawing more people with each passing week.

Sponsored by the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, the July 13 rally drew about 150,000 people, according to the organizers. The police did not release its estimate of the crowd size.

Staff members volunteered to direct the demonstrators and provide emergency medical care when needed.

After about 50,000 people gathered for the protest on June 22, the writer Takashi Hirose said, "Since the young people are putting so much effort into it, we old people should also do what we can."

Hirose and his group collected donations and chartered a helicopter to take aerial photographs of the demonstrations from June 29.

While rain fell on July 6, organizers said about 150,000 people still gathered for the protest that day. The group took a longer than normal route to reach the back of the National Diet Building. Police officers encouraged latecomers to join the end of the line and many people obeyed, forming two lines.

One young police officer shouted, "For those people participating in this event, please go to the end of the line."

While some of the young protesters laughed at the request, the police officer was apparently not making fun of the demonstrators because he said it repeatedly.

The comment may have been a reflection of the fact that there was something different about the anti-nuclear demonstrations.

There were very few banners or fliers that were connected to any political party, and it was obvious that the objective of organizers to come together on the single issue of opposition to nuclear power had been followed.

However, there was also no hint that the protest was a march because there was no sign the lines of people would move.

About 30 minutes before the scheduled end of the protest, a staff member from the organizers went around the crowd saying, "There will be no further movement. Yell out the protest slogans from here."

While people began shouting their opposition to the resumption of operations at the Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture, the Prime Minister's Office was still very far away. With no drums or other musical instruments, simply repeating the phrase over and over became a burden after 30 minutes.

There was none of the festive atmosphere that accompanied past protests organized by D.J.s and musicians in which music was a major part of the demonstrations.

Despite the simplicity of the anti-nuclear protest, it has attracted more participants every week.

In 1960, similar protests were held around the National Diet Building in opposition to the passage of the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. At that time, college students and labor unions played a central role. Media reports from that period describe fierce zigzagging marches in an attempt to break through

the gates around the Diet building to hold a sit-down demonstration. One college student, Michiko Kanba, was killed during that protest.

The demonstrations today have no zigzagging. **Because there is no room to even walk, the protests cannot even be called a march, but are closer to being a protest line.**

While some participants shouted insults at the police, among the comments posted on Twitter was one that said,

"Rather than being prepared for an arrest, have a sense of perseverance to continue the protest until the very end."

Ever since the Security Treaty protests, demonstrations in which labor unions have mobilized members were carefully orchestrated protests and did not draw the attention of passers-by on the sidewalks.

The music-oriented demonstrations that emerged in 2003 to protest the war in Iraq became a social phenomena because so many young people were drawn to it.

In a later protest against paying rent that was organized by a recycling shop in Tokyo's Koenji district, one argument was to take back the streets that had increasingly come under the control of the authorities.

The latest anti-nuclear demonstrations are clearly different from those past examples.

In his classic work "Ulysses," James Joyce has his pacifist protagonist make a comment about how even revolutions have to be conducted on an installment payment plan.

The current crop of protests has been labeled by some participants as **the "Hydrangea Revolution."** **The massive numbers of protesters can be compared to the many small flowers that make up the resilient hydrangea. The weak linkage among participants, and their calm and well-mannered conduct and the persistent manner in which the main argument is repeated, conjures up similarities to the ubiquitous flower.**

By KOTARO KONDO/ Staff Writer

Former prime minister joins antinuke rally

July 21, 2012

Ex-premier Hatoyama joins antinuclear rally near PM's office

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120721p2g00m0dm027000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- In an unusual move by a former prime minister, Democratic Party of Japan heavyweight Yukio Hatoyama joined an antinuclear rally on a street in front of the prime minister's office in Tokyo on Friday, saying **he believes it is premature to reactivate nuclear reactors in the country.**

With a microphone in his hand, Hatoyama said, "I must play a role to change the political trends by conveying people's voices to the prime minister's office as a former prime minister."

Hatoyama later called at the prime minister's office and asked Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura to have Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda meet with antinuclear protesters. The top government spokesman responded he would convey the request to Noda.

Hatoyama told reporters he joined the latest in the weekly protest actions "from the standpoint it's premature to reactivate nuclear reactors," which have been idled amid public concern over the safety of nuclear power following the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

His behavior drew criticism from the ruling party, however, with Koriki Jojima, the DPJ's Diet affairs chief, saying at a press conference the former leader should make efforts to advance his viewpoint from within the party itself.

Meanwhile, Naoto Kan, another former prime minister from the DPJ, and his group worked out a draft outline of a bill to oblige the government to compile a basic plan to break with nuclear power generation by having no reactors running by fiscal 2025, while expanding renewable energy and taking employment measures.

To submit the bill to the Diet, the group said it plans to call on party members for support and take procedures to gain approval from the party's policy panel.

Victims of their own success

Source : Asahi – Japon

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201207230004>

Organizers getting fatigued from growing anti-nuke protests

July 23, 2012

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

As crowds of anti-nuclear protesters near the Prime Minister's Official Residence reach as many as 90,000, the networks of small groups that have organized the Friday night demonstrations are becoming victims of their own success.

"Doing this every week interferes with work and has an effect on our daily lives," said Tokyo-based illustrator Misao Redwolf, one of the main organizers of the protests. "It becomes harder to schedule volunteers. There is a difference of opinion among the various member groups about whether we should continue or not."

The huge crowds of anti-nuclear protesters that have been gathering every Friday night are becoming an increasing burden on the organizers.

While the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes is the official organizer, it itself is made up of many small groups that have little experience handling crowds that organizers have said have reached as many as 90,000. Many of the groups have asked members to volunteer in controlling the masses that march near the Prime Minister's Official Residence.

The demonstration on July 20 was the 16th held so far.

One individual trying to direct traffic shouted, "Please do not push."

However, as the night progressed and more and more people converged on the scene, some protesters got into arguments with police after straying out of line.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes used about 100 volunteers to organize the protest. However, some of the groups that make up the coalition were admitting they lack the experience of large labor unions that have organized events with large numbers of participants.

One of the 13 groups in the coalition is the Energy Shift Parade, which only has about 15 members. Norimichi Hattori, 36, of Matsudo, Chiba Prefecture, is one of the central members of that group.

"It is becoming more difficult to recruit staff to help organize the protests," he said.

Because he works at a planning company, Hattori himself only arrives at the protest site after his work day is over.

When the first protest was held in front of the Prime Minister's Official Residence in late March, there were only about 300 participants.

The number of protesters increased rapidly from about the time attention was focused on whether operations would resume at the Oi nuclear power plant, operated by Kansai Electric Power Co.

Even protest organizers now admit they never expected the demonstrations to turn into such a huge social phenomena.

On July 20, a 46-year-old company employee from Higashi-Murayama in western Tokyo participated for the first time because he felt he had to do something.

"The organizers and participants are all ordinary people," the man said. "I felt no reason for not taking part because it did not seem to have close ties to any major organization."

At the same time, the demonstrations have not stopped the central government from allowing two reactors at the Oi plant to resume operations.

Moreover, since 100 days have passed since the first protest, fatigue has set in among some of the groups making up the coalition.

Those playing central roles have held meetings to prepare for the demonstrations, coordinate among member groups and consult with the police.

A major protest to encircle the National Diet Building is being scheduled for July 29, but no decision has yet been made on what to do beyond that.

At the same time, some organizers are heartened by the unexpected response.

"By being here, we are applying pressure on the government," Redwolf said. "We have to decide what the best way is to somehow continue the movement."

(This article was written by Hideshi Nishimoto and Akiko Tada.)

Gensuikuin again in Fukushima

July 28, 2012

Antinuclear group begins annual meetings from Fukushima

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120728p2g00m0fp049000c.html>

FUKUSHIMA -- (Kyodo) A major Japanese antinuclear group kicked off its series of annual conventions Saturday in Fukushima, northeastern Japan, having chosen the city afflicted by the country's worst nuclear accident that occurred last year as another venue to atomic-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the second time.

The Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs, known as Gensuikin, will gather people suffering from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant accident as well as survivors of the 1945 atomic bombings among participants to the events through Aug. 9 themed on breaking with nuclear power generation to call for a nuclear-free society, organizers said.

At the outset of the one-day meeting, participants offered a silent prayer to victims of the bombings and of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeastern Japan and triggered the meltdown of three reactors at the Tokyo Electric Power Co. plant in Fukushima Prefecture.

"The accident in Fukushima (Prefecture) made it clear that a nuclear accident can occur anytime in our country. To never repeat Fukushima, all nuclear plants must be halted," said Koichi Kawano, the 72-year-old Gensuikin head who survived the Nagasaki bombing, in an opening address.

Participants in the event are expected to declare it is possible to eradicate nuclear weapons and do away with nuclear energy in light of growing movements against nuclear power, according to the organizers.

After former nuclear plant design engineer Masashi Goto talks about the current situation and challenges following the accident, among other speakers, the participants will march through the city, they said.

Anti-nuclear meeting held again in Fukushima

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120728_32.html

A major Japanese anti-nuclear group has called for support for people affected by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant and decommissioning of all nuclear plants in Japan.

Gensuikin, or the Japan Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, began holding annual meetings in Fukushima City, in addition to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, after last year's accident. Fukushima Prefecture is home to the damaged nuclear plant.

The organizer says about 1,000 people from around the country took part in this year's event.

Gensuikin head Koichi Kawano, who survived the Nagasaki bombing, said the reconstruction of Fukushima must be done quickly.

He said a nuclear accident can occur anytime anywhere, and that all nuclear plants must be halted to prevent another event like that at Fukushima.

The meeting then called on Tokyo Electric Power Company, the operator of the plant, and the government to make the plant safe again. Participants also sought an apology and compensation for victims, and disclosure of information on conditions at the plant.

The event adopted a pledge to work to end discrimination and prejudice against sufferers and to move away from nuclear energy.

A woman from Nagasaki said she took part in the event to call for an end to nuclear power and to oppose the resumption of nuclear reactors alongside the people of Fukushima.

The new Japanese Greens

July 29, 2012

Green party launched in Japan to oppose nuclear energy

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120729p2g00m0dm037000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A Japanese civic group held an inaugural meeting of a green party Saturday in Tokyo with an aim to field candidates in national elections on the environmental platform including opposition to nuclear energy.

As a political organization, which has not met legal requirements as a political party, Greens Japan will seek cooperation with other civic groups and local parties for the time being, while making arrangements with an eye on the next House of Representatives election and next summer's House of Councillors election, it said.

Comprising about 70 members such as citizens and local assembly members, the group intends to model its political activities after green parties in Europe, which have strong influence in environmental policy-making.

Its platform features swiftly breaking away from nuclear power generation and introducing renewable energy, the group said.

"As the ruling Democratic Party of Japan and the largest opposition Liberal Democratic Party have both approved the restart of nuclear reactors, voters are deprived of the option to realize the stance 'breakaway from nuclear power and objection to the resumption'," said Akira Miyabe, the group's 59-year-old deputy head.

"A party that strongly pursues environmental policies is needed," he said.

New protestors join in

Antinuke demonstrators form human chain around Diet building

Ordinary citizens by the hundreds join activists in human chain

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120729x1.html>

By SETSUKO KAMIYA and MIZUHO AOKI
Staff writers

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people including ordinary citizens and antinuclear activists gathered in Tokyo Sunday afternoon to form a human chain around the Diet building, calling for the abolition of nuclear power plants and putting more pressure on the Cabinet of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.

In the past, protest rallies around the Diet were usually organized by political parties and labor unions. But like many other rallies organized in the aftermath of the triple meltdowns that erupted in the Fukushima disaster, Sunday's was attended by many nonactivist citizens.

"This is really a very hot summer, but although none of the nuclear power plants of Tokyo Electric Power Co. are operating, we're not short of electricity in Tokyo," said Keiko Ochai, an author who is among the organizers of the rally.

"We have to push for the halting of the Oi nuclear power plant, and need to keep the government from restarting other nuclear power plants," she said, referring to the nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture

at which two reactors have been reactivated following safety checkups mandated in the wake of the Fukushima disaster.

Protesters gathered at around 3:30 p.m. at Hibiya Park in Chiyoda Ward under a scorching sun with hand-made signs and banners in their hands.

After marching roughly 1.5 km through the Uchisaiwaicho district and close to JR Shinbashi station, the protesters surrounded the Diet building holding candles and penlights to put more pressure on lawmakers to stop the planned reactivation of more nuclear reactors.

The organizer, Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, an association of antinuclear citizens' groups, initially planned to provide candles to every participant, but with the number of attendees ballooning, they decided to hand them out only to those who were able to stand near the main entrance of the Diet building.

Some of the participants said they were attending an antinuclear rally for the first time. Maya Yamaguchi, 25, from Tokyo's Meguro Ward, said she was concerned about the issue and wanted to hear what others were saying. She signed an antinuclear petition and wrote about it on her Facebook page, which was picked up by her friend, Yuri Inomata, 27, who invited her to join her at the rally.

Inomata, from Sagami-hara in Kanagawa Prefecture, now believes that many people have changed their attitudes toward antinuclear demonstrations.

"I think more people realize that this issue concerns ourselves," she said. "It's important for us to keep raising our voice," she said.

Kotaro Kikuchi, 22, a student from Iwate Prefecture, said he travelled to Tokyo on Sunday morning with his friend, but with a somewhat different aim than participating in the rallies. "I guess most of the people who gathered here want to say 'no' to the restart of nuclear reactors. But I came here to say 'no' to 'fuhyo-higai' (the damage caused by groundless rumors) that the Tohoku region has been suffering from" since the triple-meltdown crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 plant, Kikuchi said.

Kikuchi, who was participating in a demonstration for the first time, said the Tohoku region won't recover if rumors continue to circulate based on groundless fears of radiation, which he says is making people shy away from the area.

"I've heard that some boards of education decided not to choose Tohoku as a destination for school trips," Kikuchi said. "When I heard that, I really thought we have to raise our voices. Otherwise, Iwate Prefecture won't be revitalized."

Kikuchi said that the nuclear crisis that led to the rumors and subsequent damage should never be allowed to happen again.

Laurent Mabesoone, 43, a French haiku poet from Nagano Prefecture, said he and his wife, Toyo, 42, and their 4-year-old daughter also arrived in Tokyo on Sunday morning to participate in the rally. Living only 60 km away from the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture, he expressed his opposition to restarting idled power plants.

"If the same kind of accident happens at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant, it'd all be over. It would be (like) an area that has been hit over and over by earthquakes. We should not allow the restart of the power plant," he said.

Mabesoone said he kicked off an antinuclear campaign in Nagano Prefecture on Friday. "Over 100 people gathered. We will continue to hold the demonstration in Nagano every Friday to coincide with Tokyo. . . . From reactions on Twitter and Facebook, I guess the number will grow more," Mabesoone said.

"I believe it's time to raise our voices. Otherwise, there won't be a future for us," his wife said. If we continue to raise our voices, our wishes will eventually be heard by the government, she added.

Antinuclear rally to encircle Diet with candlelight

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120729p2g00m0dm042000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- People took to the streets in central Tokyo Sunday to protest the resumption of two nuclear reactors at the Oi power plant on the Sea of Japan coast after all of the nation's reactors were shut down following the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi complex.

After marching from Hibiya Park, they will encircle the Diet building with candlelight, while several lawmakers from both ruling and opposition parties as well as the Australian Green Party will address them in front of the main gate of the Diet building.

The demonstration was organized by the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, whose rallies in front of the prime minister's office every Friday have drawn tens of thousands of citizens.

Misao Redwolf, an illustrator and one of the organizers, said at a press conference Friday, "We have gathered larger numbers of people than we expected," reflecting "everyone's anger at the government's decision to restart the nuclear reactors." She added that the weekly rallies will continue until the government shuts down the Oi reactors.

Unlike conventional protests in Japan organized by labor unions and political groups, a large number of independent citizens, including children, have joined the weekly Friday demonstrations, although many of them had never taken to streets before, the group said.

It said it has called for participation mainly through microblogging site Twitter and has contrived ways to draw ordinary citizens by banning participants from carrying banners with names of unions and political groups as well as by creating special areas for families with children.

The first rally on March 29 drew only about 300 people, but the number of protesters has grown since, especially after Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda decided to reactivate Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear reactors in Fukui Prefecture on June 16, the organizer said.

The number reached around 200,000 on June 29, the group claimed, but the Metropolitan Police Department came out with the drastically lower figure of 17,000.

The Hydrangea Revolution (follow-up)

For photos of the July 29 march, check this link:

<http://fukushima.over-blog.fr/article-revolution-des-hortensias-les-japonais-ne-lachent-rien-108633193.html>

17,000 - or 200,000 - around the Diet

July 30, 2012

Antinuclear protestors march through Tokyo, surround Diet building

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120730p2a00m0na012000c.html>

Tens of thousands of angry citizens from all walks of life marched through Tokyo and surrounded the Diet building under scorching heat on July 29, demanding the government scrap its decision to reactivate nuclear reactors and break its dependence on nuclear power once and for all.

The mass antinuclear rally, organized by the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which has urged ordinary citizens to gather in front of the Prime Minister's Office every Friday to protest against nuclear power, kicked off at Hibiya Park at around 3:30 p.m. The demonstrators then marched in central Tokyo where government offices are concentrated to the headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), the operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, and the Diet building.

Chanting antinuclear slogans such as "Stop nuclear power!" and "We oppose the reactivation of nuclear reactors," the demonstrators, including children, housewives and elderly people, filled about 1.3 kilometers of streets surrounding the Diet building at 7 p.m.

Norihide Taniguchi, a 25-year-old senior at Waseda University who took part in the rally with his friends, said, "It is wrong to ignore the lives of evacuees (from the Fukushima nuclear disaster) and reactivate nuclear reactors."

Yoshihide Furukawa, 61, took part in the demonstration for the first time in 40 years since he took part in a student movement when he was a high school student. Furukawa from Tokyo's Kunitachi said, "In those days, although I was young, I was thinking of changing the world in my own way. In this demonstration (today), men and women of all ages and various people are freely taking part without any restrictions. The Japan of today is not bad at all."

The organizers said the number of protesters reached around 200,000, but the Metropolitan Police Department dismissed that figure and said the number was about 17,000.

Temperatures of 35 degrees Celsius or above were recorded at 74 of 927 observation points across the country on July 29, including Tokyo's Nerima Ward registering 35.3 degrees Celsius. The demonstrators braved the scorching heat to protest against the country's nuclear policy.

Misao Redwolf, an illustrator and one of the organizers, said, "We have occasionally been criticized for being 'halfhearted,' but what is important is to put pressure with a number of people. We would like to try to create an atmosphere in which ordinary citizens can take part and continue to raise our voice in a simple fashion without breaking down."

There were tumultuous scenes near the Diet building as some protesters drifted onto the streets and were stopped by riot police. Two men, who were believed to be among the demonstrators, were arrested on the spot on suspicion of obstructing officers.

Noda intends to listen to everybody's opinion

August 2, 2012

Noda to meet anti-nuke protest organizer

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120802p2a00m0na010000c.html>

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda is set to meet a representative of a citizens group arranging large weekly protests in front of his office in Tokyo against the restarting of nuclear power plants, it has been learned.

Sources close to the prime minister said he is "positive" about taking part in a meeting with a group representative. The move is seen as a response to suggestions from within the government and the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) that he could be seen as ignoring the voices of people opposed to restarting suspended nuclear power plants in Japan. Protests against reactivation of the reactors have been rapidly expanding.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura told a news conference on Aug. 1 that when Noda had a telephone conversation with former Prime Minister Naoto Kan on July 30, Noda discussed the protests, saying, "I want to hear the opinions of the public, no matter which side they are on."

In the meeting with the citizens group, Noda is expected to express understanding of the public's concerns in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and explain the need to reactivate nuclear reactors for the time being.

Noda to meet with antinuclear rally organizers

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120802x1.html>

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda will meet the organizers of the antinuclear rallies attended by tens of thousands of protesters every Friday outside his office, possibly next week, according to government sources.

Members of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which vocally protested the July restart of two reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, earlier this week asked former Prime Minister Naoto Kan and other Diet members to arrange a meeting with Noda.

The prime minister has been reluctant to meet with them until now, but the growing scale of the protests has apparently forced a change of stance. Noda intends to listen to the activists' views but will reiterate his support for restarting the two Oi reactors and explain the safety measures taken, the sources said.

The coalition's first antinuclear rally drew only 300 people March 29, but the number of protesters has continued to swell, especially after the government's approval June 16 for the Oi reactor to be restarted.

About 200,000 people turned out for a demonstration held June 29, according to the organizers, although the Metropolitan Police Department put the figure at less than 20,000.

Fukushima seen as the third tragedy caused by nuclear energy

August 7, 2012

New impetus for antinuke movement

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ed20120806a1.html>

Last year saw a new dimension added to the anniversaries of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Unlike in the past, people and groups involved with the cause of abolishing nuclear weapons started calling for the phaseout of nuclear power generation, including dropping plans to build new nuclear power plants while decommissioning existing plants, one by one.

This attitude was driven by the crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, which has made the risk of radiation exposure all too real for many people.

This year we hear voices spreading at the grass-roots level, calling on Japan to stop its reliance on nuclear power. Every Friday evening, tens of thousands of people gather near the Diet Building and the prime minister's official residence, calling for an end to Japan's use of nuclear power.

Similar street protests and lecture meetings have also been held in other places including Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima, Osaka, Kyoto and Nagoya. The Internet is playing an important role in mobilizing people.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki became the first cities in history to be destroyed by nuclear weapons; survivors there have suffered from the serious effects of radiation exposure.

The Fukushima nuclear crisis has turned out to be one of the world's worst nuclear accidents. In the psyche of Japanese people, Fukushima was added to Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a symbol of the suffering and tragedy caused by the use of atomic energy, whether in the form of weapons or in the form of electricity generation.

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, and that of Nagasaki three days later, killed an estimated 140,000 people and 74,000 people, respectively, by the end of 1945. Many survivors suffered from illnesses caused by radiation.

The Fukushima nuclear disaster continues. Radiation exposure risks have forced some 160,000 people to evacuate their homes. Many people had to shutter their businesses. Out of despair, some people chose to kill themselves.

On the evening of July 29, people calling for ending the use of nuclear power ringed the Diet Building. The police said that more than 10,000 people took part. But organizers said that some 200,000 people participated. One participant said he would like to see all nuclear power plants as well as all nuclear weapons banished from the face of the Earth.

The viewpoint of extending the anti-nuclear power movement in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster to include the movement for abolishing nuclear weapons is important. The momentum started by U.S. President Barack Obama's speech in Prague in 2009, in which he called for creation of a world without nuclear weapons, appears to have weakened this year.

As a nation that has experienced three nuclear tragedies, Japan is in a position to push for abolition of nuclear weapons with persuasive influence.

It is also important to quash any move inside Japan to utilize nuclear power generation as a preliminary step toward nuclear armament, as was implied by a national "security" clause recently inserted into the Atomic Energy Basic Act and in the law to establish a Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Antinukes will have to wait

August 8, 2012

Noda to postpone Wed. meeting with antinuclear rally hosts

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120808p2g00m0dm016000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda decided Tuesday to postpone a meeting scheduled Wednesday with organizers of the antinuclear demonstrations held every Friday in front of the premier's office, government sources said.

The decision comes as smaller opposition parties submitted a no-confidence motion against his Cabinet to the lower house and a nonbinding censure motion against the premier to the upper house late Tuesday in opposition to Noda's key policy goal of a sales tax hike.

Noda will rearrange his schedule to hold talks with the organizers, the sources added, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura saying at a press conference that the premier is "willing to listen to various voices."

Members of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, who had protested against the resumption of two nuclear reactors at the Oi power plant on the Sea of Japan coast, had asked former Prime Minister Naoto Kan and other Diet members to arrange a meeting with Noda.

Noda is believed to have been reluctant to meet with the organizers, but was forced to change his stance, considering the growing scale of the protests every Friday, which have drawn tens of thousands of people in recent weeks.

The government decided in June to reactivate the Nos. 3 and 4 nuclear reactors at the Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture for the first time since Japan suffered its worst nuclear plant crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi complex last year.

Green Foundation (Korea) and Peace Boat (Japan) unite against nukes

August 14, 2012

NGO plans Japanese-Korean antinuclear energy cruise

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120814f2.html>

A Tokyo-based peace group is inviting people to take part in a tour in December of Japanese and South Korean cities, including those with nuclear power plants, to expand the movement against nuclear energy, the organizer said.

Under a joint project with Seoul-based Korea Green Foundation, the nongovernmental organization Peace Boat **plans to take more than 700 participants to areas near nuclear power plants in the two countries so they can exchange opinions with local residents about scrapping nuclear power.**

"Demonstrations in Japan have become a large civic action now. As our next step, we need to hear the voices of residents (near atomic plants) and discuss how to really stop nuclear power plants, not just oppose them," said veteran journalist Satoshi Kamata, who is taking part in the tour.

Some people, including those in places with power plants, are promoting nuclear power over blackout and job loss fears, among other issues, expected from abolition, the NGO said.

In Japan, the Peace & Green Boat 2012 tour will visit Hakata and Tsuruga, which have nuclear plants, and South Korea's Busan, home to the Kori nuclear plant.

The eight-day trip will start on Dec. 1. Prices for the tour range from ¥89,000 to ¥198,000 per person.

Participants will also visit renewable energy facilities on the South Korean island of Jeju and meet with atomic bomb survivors in Nagasaki, the NGO said.

An anti-nuclear banker ?

August 15, 2012

Bank chairman stands defiant with blunt anti-nuclear message

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120813p2a00m0na006000c.html>

I was hardly getting anywhere trying to write about "hope" and the general election that's supposed to come sooner or later when Tsuyoshi Yoshiwara, chairman of Johnan Shinkin Bank, appeared on television.

"Can the member corporations of the Keidanren (the Japan Business Federation) buy out nuclear reactors themselves and operate them?" he asked, point blank.

"There's no way banks would provide financing," he continued. **"Corporations propose something (the continuation of nuclear reactors) that they can't even do on their own, knowing full well that the burden will ultimately fall on the public.** And yet they say that what they propose is 'realistic.' That makes no sense, and is most irresponsible."

At a time when everyone is trying hard not to step on any toes, Yoshiwara's remarks have **a rare straightforwardness** to it. They had a great impact as a public comment made by the top officer of a financial institution, even granting that as financial institutions go, he is a relative lightweight.

According to TV Asahi that ran the program, viewer reaction was split in half between: "He's gone and said what needed to be said," and "He's disgraceful." Regardless, Yoshiwara's frankness on a popular television show has created waves in viewers' hearts.

Those in the know are already familiar with Yoshiwara's anti-nuclear stance. He appears frequently in newspapers and on television, and has been a plaintiff in a suit to decommission Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant in Shizuoka Prefecture. Some criticize Yoshiwara's words and deeds as inappropriate for the head of a financial institution, or even worse, a publicity stunt, but that doesn't seem to be the case. Talking to him face-to-face, it's evident that his convictions are solidly based on the traditions of and his experiences in regional finance.

Johnan Shinkin Bank, whose name means "south of the (Edo) castle," ranks second among all shinkin banks in deposits. Its predecessor, Johnan Credit Union, was founded in 1945 in Tokyo's Ota Ward. Yoshiwara, also an Ota Ward native, joined the company in 1977 upon his graduation from Keio University, and worked closely with the late chairman Tetsugoro Obara, known as the "don" of the shinkin bank industry.

"Do not stoop to being a mere bank," was one of the famous sayings left behind by Obara. He explained that **shinkin banks contributed to making the people of the community happy by protecting the community, and that this was different from ordinary banks, whose primary objective was profit.** In the 1960s, when Japan was in the midst of its rapid economic growth period and a push for shinkin banks,

which are cooperative unions, to become stock companies and merge with banks increased momentum, Obara led the detractors in stopping it from happening.

Obara united shinkin banks nationwide, arguing: "Super-capitalism that ignores local communities, moves forward without regard to people, and is obsessed with efficiency, will bring a country down." That Obara's passion managed to move even the then director of the Ministry of Finance's Banking Bureau Satoshi Sumita, and Sohei Nakayama, then president of the Industrial Bank of Japan, is now the stuff of legend.

This does not, however, mean that Johnan has always abided by Obara's teachings. Yoshiwara only came to power in November 2010 after two predecessors, who had inherited status through favoritism and a culture that prioritized profit above everything else, were ousted by a majority vote of the board of directors. Once in power, Yoshiwara rewrote the rules: the chairman has a compulsory retirement age of 60 and receives a salary of 12 million yen or lower, which is the equivalent of a branch manager's salary. Hereditary transfer of power is out of the question. No luxury cars are permitted for company use.

Having gone through some bitter struggles, **Yoshiwara's anti-nuclear stance is part of his larger effort to return to tradition.** He has inherited Obara's spirit, one that does not hesitate to protest government policy if need be.

One of Yoshiwara's favorite books is "The Wealth of Nations" by Adam Smith, which includes a comparison of stock companies and cooperative unions. Smith posits -- in a part of the book that was added after he witnessed the chaos of the British East India Company -- that cooperative unions have the discipline of member autonomy, but stock company operations are plagued by delinquency and waste. Yoshiwara thinks there are parallels that can be drawn today.

The scandals that continue to emerge from the finance industry both at home and abroad, the disorder of massive stock corporations, and an industrial system dependent on nuclear power are all interconnected. Yoshiwara's sharp anti-nuclear defiance at a historic turning point in capitalism is neither an impulse, a jump on the bandwagon, nor a political show. (By Takao Yamada, Expert Senior Writer)

Book of Ryoichi Hashimoto's writings

August 15, 2012

Professor composes book of writings by late anti-nuke activist father

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20120815p2a00m0na003000c.html>

Professor emeritus Tetsuya Hashimoto, 71, wants his father to be understood.

His dad Ryoichi passed away at age 80 in the winter of 1982, but not long before that Ryoichi handed his son some 900 pages of writings.

"What did he want me to do with this?" says Hashimoto of the writings, which have a cover reading "Notes of the anti A- and H-bomb movement centered in Sugunami Ward (Tokyo)." After a March 1954 hydrogen bomb test at the Bikini Atoll where the crew on a Japanese fishing boat was exposed to radiation, housewives in Sugunami Ward started a signature-collecting drive. Ryoichi, formerly a newspaper reporter, was one of the founders.

The anti-nuclear movement grew, and on Aug. 6, 1955, a large anti-nuclear meeting was held in Hiroshima. However, amidst the ideological battles of the Cold War, anti-nuclear activists who had helped support each other began competing for political power, and in a mere 10 years the society formed by the anti-nuclear activists separated. Ryoichi's notes end dated Feb. 17, 1965, with the passage, "I rest my pen hoping for a correct restart to the peace movement."

Ryoichi turned his back to the movement, and visits from group affiliates suddenly stopped. Ryoichi spent the latter part of his life traveling with his wife.

In 1971, having gone to Kanazawa University for work, Hashimoto met Hiroshima-born Mikiso Iwasa, who took a liking to him. Iwasa, while working on research in political philosophy, also worked for the support of atomic bomb victims like himself. Iwasa had been exposed to the bomb at age 16. He couldn't save from the flames his mother, who was trapped under debris of their collapsed house, or find the body of his younger sister. When he'd drunk alcohol, he would talk about the experiences, and those stories remain firmly planted in Hashimoto's memory. He supported Iwasa by collecting money on campus for his anti-nuclear campaigning overseas.

Hashimoto also heard that Iwasa had made the trip to Hiroshima for the first international anti A- and H-bomb convention in 1955. The following year, following a second such convention, the Japan Confederation of A- and H- Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo) was founded. Like the society Hashimoto's father had been involved with, Iwasa's group faced a split, but they overcame the situation by holding to the principle that they were working for the sake of the atomic bomb sufferers. Hashimoto couldn't bring himself to mention to Iwasa that his father had quit the movement.

In July this year, Hashimoto finished putting together a book of his father's writings. Since retiring in 2008 he had been working on the book, and in the middle of his work the Fukushima nuclear disaster

occurred. The cross-party anti-nuclear movement since then shows similarity to the movement his father was involved with.

The signature-collecting movement held almost 60 years ago gathered 300,000 names in a month. When the activists felt like giving up, Ryoichi wrote that they brought their anger "from the streets back to their homes, but it continued to burn." He believed in the power of the grassroots movement, and Hashimoto, wanting Iwasa to see that, has sent him one of only seven copies of the book he made.

Balloons against radiation

August 18, 2012

1,000 balloons released to predict spread of radiation in nuclear plant disaster



People release red balloons into the sky in Omaezaki, Shizuoka Prefecture, on Aug. 18. (Mainichi)
<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120818p2a00m0na012000c.html>

OMAEZAKI, Shizuoka -- Around 25 people gathered along the shore here on Aug. 18 to release balloons to predict the spread of radioactive materials from the nearby Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant in the event of a disaster there.

A total of 1,000 balloons were due to be released by the end of the day. The project, initiated amid concerns that a major earthquake could strike the plant, was planned by photographer Masatoshi Nakagawa, 60.

At 10:40 a.m. on Aug. 18, around 100 red balloons were simultaneously released on the Shirowa coast as an easterly wind blew. The balloons carry cards asking people who find them to contact the project organizers. The locations that the balloons land will be announced on the Internet by the organizers, as they call for vigilance against nuclear plant disasters.

"I want people to see the effects of a nuclear disaster with their eyes and have a concrete image of it," says Nakagawa.

Ongoing protests

August 18, 2012

Protesters continue anti-nuclear protests after 'Obon' holiday

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120818p2a00m0na010000c.html>

Protesters defied the summer heat to continue their call against nuclear power in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo on Aug. 17, following the "Obon" holiday period.

Anti-nuclear rallies have been held in front of the Prime Minister's Office every Friday evening since this spring. Crowds of protesters in the Aug. 17 rally chanted such slogans as "Stop nuclear power generation" and "Protect our children."

"We can't meddle in issues pertaining to the Senkaku Islands (controlled by Japan but disputed by the People's Republic of China and Taiwan) and Takeshima (controlled by South Korea but claimed by Japan), but nuclear power is a serious issue relating to the future of our children," said Makio Tahara, 64, from Misato, Saitama Prefecture, who took part in the rally for the first time along with his 10-year-old grandson, Itsuki.

Itsuki, who is a resident of Chiba Prefecture and was visiting his grandfather during the summer break, has been learning about nuclear energy.

"We don't even know how to protect ourselves from radiation. We don't need nuclear power plants!" he shouted during the rally.

The high temperature in Tokyo on Aug. 17 reached 35.7 degrees Celsius.

What are Noda's motives?

August 23, 2012

Noda looks to tap new support, hold DPJ together with anti-nuke activist meet

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120823p2a00m0na014000c.html>

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda met with anti-nuclear activists on Aug. 22, apparently to show he is actively taking anti-nuclear sentiment among both the public and his own Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) into account ahead of the party's leadership election in September, as well as the next general election.

Noda came under mounting pressure to listen to activists' opinions as an ongoing deliberative poll on Japan's energy future shows the ratio of members of the public in favor of a zero-nuclear option is rising.

Some in the DPJ and opposition parties, however, worry that the meeting with the activists could set an undesirable precedent.

"Don't use us to get votes," said one member of an anti-atomic power citizens group during the Aug. 22 talks with Noda. "We didn't come here to play politics. We came here to stop nuclear power."

The prime minister's office had originally taken a very cautious approach to any sit-down between Noda and the activists, saying there was "no precedent for the prime minister to meet members of a citizens group." The office changed its stance only after it became clear the anti-nuclear movement was showing

no signs of abating, while at the same time the zero nuclear scenario was attracting strong support in the deliberative poll.

Meanwhile, Noda has also promised the opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and New Komeito that he would dissolve the House of Representatives and hold a general election "soon," despite low public support for his Cabinet because of the consumption tax hike.

With anti-nuclear protests attracting tens of thousands of citizens and weekly demonstrations in front of his office, Noda simply can't ignore the potential power of the protesters' voices in the upcoming election. The demonstrations have attracted those who are not tied to established political parties or labor unions. The government apparently feared that these activists could join hands with a so-called "third force" in Japanese politics, such as the Osaka Restoration Association led by Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto.

Also playing into the decision to have the meeting was an unwillingness on Noda's side to embarrass former Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who met with the activists at the end of July this year. During that meeting, Kan told the activists that Noda had expressed his willingness to meet with citizens groups.

Afterwards, hopes of a meeting with the PM grew among the activists, while sources close to Noda say he "agreed with Kan's assessment that we should get a better grip on public opinion" by sitting down with the citizens group.

Another major factor in behind the Aug. 22 talks is the genuine danger that the nuclear issue could split the ruling party. Three DPJ House of Councillors members left the party in July when Noda green-lighted the reactivation of two nuclear reactors in Fukui Prefecture. Meanwhile, there have been major stirrings of an "anti-Noda" candidate being fielded in the party's September leadership vote, possibly leading the prime minister to take the power of the anti-nuclear movement seriously.

Conversely, some in the DPJ as well as in opposition parties expressed reservations about Noda's meeting with the activists, with DPJ House of Councillors Affairs Committee chair Shuji Ikeguchi stating in an Aug. 22 news conference, "It is not at all desirable that people think they will get a meeting with the prime minister if they protest in front of his office."

LDP policy chief Toshimitsu Motegi, meanwhile, said that Noda "should be cautious about which representatives he meets from what section of society."

There are some in the political parties who are nervous that prime ministerial meetings with activists -- excluding party input -- will become the norm, potentially weakening their role as representatives of the Japanese people.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura tried to lay those worries to rest at an Aug. 22 news conference, telling reporters, "I think this issue has been put to rest" and that the day's meeting would be the only one. At a morning news conference on the same day, Fujimura stated, "It's very important to stress that former Prime Minister Kan worked as an intermediary" in bringing about the meeting, emphasizing that it was an exceptional response to an exceptional situation. (By Naoki Oita, Yoshitaka Koyama, Political News Department, and Hiroshi Miyajima, Economic News Department)

Noda and anti-nuke groups not on same wavelength

Noda unswayed by talks with rally leaders

Prime minister defends reactor restarts in 30-minute exchange

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120823a1.html>

By MASAMI ITO
Staff writer

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda should listen to the voices of the people and abolish all atomic reactors as soon as possible, organizers of the weekly antinuclear rallies told the nation's leader in a face-to-face meeting Wednesday.

Noda met with the representatives at his office for about 30 minutes. As expected, the two sides failed to see eye to eye over the contentious issue.

The prime minister explained that he made the decision to restart two reactors at the Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture after considering all factors.

The government "is aiming to change Japan's reliance on nuclear power in the mid- to long term . . . but we came to the decision to reactivate reactors 3 and 4 at the Oi plant after comprehensively considering various angles, including safety and the impact on people's lives," Noda said during the meeting, which was open to journalists.

"This is the decision that we came to, but there is no limit to securing safety. . . . We will continue to make ceaseless efforts to improve safety measures."

The rally organizers were not satisfied.

Nuclear power "is not safe now and the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant is still ongoing," said the representative of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes. "How can a government that can't maintain safety right now be able to provide nuclear safety in the future? We the people do not believe you."

The government has been seeking public opinion on the ideal energy mix in 2030.

The Noda administration is aiming to lay out the nation's new energy policy soon, and the focus is on the degree to which public opinion will be factored in.

"The government will ultimately take responsibility over the direction (of the energy policy) and what sort of energy structure will secure public safety, but I will take your opinions as a reference point and come to a decision after hearing various views," Noda said.

Members of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes and thousands of other participants have been gathering outside the prime minister's office every Friday to protest the government's decision to reactivate the two Oi reactors.

Participants at Wednesday's meeting urged Noda to listen to the people's voices that are trying to reach out to him every Friday.

"Our voices are not just a 'loud noise.' Please reflect the people's earnest pleas in national policy," the representative of the group pressed. "And if the government continues to ignore the people's voices and proceeds with the reactivation of reactors, including at the Oi plant, we will continue to firmly protest."

August 22, 2012

Noda, anti-nuclear groups disagree

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120822_25.html

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and anti-nuclear citizens' groups remain far apart over the country's energy policy.

Noda on Wednesday met about 10 representatives of groups that organize anti-nuclear rallies mainly every Friday outside the prime minister's official residence in central Tokyo.

The members said Noda restarted two reactors at the Ohi plant in central Japan in July, proving he had not learned anything from the Fukushima accident. They said the disaster has yet to be brought under control.

They noted their protests are expanding with people expressing their anger. They added they are determined to continue their activities as long as the government restarts reactors, ignoring the will of the people.

The groups urged Noda to halt the two reactors at the Ohi plant, and not to restart offline reactors. The citizens demanded Noda scrap all of Japan's nuclear power plants.

The group also asked him to withdraw the people nominated to potentially be on the new nuclear regulatory body that will be launched next month. They are criticizing the process as lacking transparency.

Noda said that he approved the restart of the Ohi plant after establishing its safety, and that decision was for the sake of people's lives, not to benefit certain business groups.

He promised continued efforts to strengthen the safety of nuclear plants, and that the new regulatory commission will conduct strict safety checks of nuclear facilities across Japan.

The prime minister said that the government's basic energy policy is to reduce the country's reliance on nuclear energy in a long run. He stated that he will make decisions while carefully listening to people's opinions.

But the representatives said that they cannot accept Noda's stance and will press for a nuclear-free Japan.

Protests against appointment of nuclear promoters

September 12, 2012

Groups rally against new nuclear regulator

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20120912_03.html

Citizens' groups opposing nuclear power generation have held a rally in Tokyo to protest the appointments for a new nuclear regulator. The 5-member body will be launched next week.

Members of civic groups from Tokyo and other areas, including Fukushima Prefecture, held up banners in front of the industry ministry on Tuesday afternoon.

The protesters are especially against the selection of the head of the new commission. They say Shunichi Tanaka is not qualified for the post because he has been promoting nuclear energy for years.

A woman from Fukushima Prefecture says the groups have been calling for the repeal of the appointments for the past month. She says it is unacceptable to select the panel after the Diet went into recess.

A member of a Tokyo civic group says he is against all 5 appointments because **nuclear promoters cannot adequately regulate the industry.**

In the evening, hundreds of people formed a human chain around the industry ministry. They say they will continue their protests because the appointments have not been officially confirmed.

Japan should "take the lead in nuclear arms reductions"

September 12, 2012

Editorial: Nuclear deterrence can never justify nuclear fuel cycle project

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120912p2a00m0na007000c.html>

The government has delayed the completion of a new energy and environment strategy it had originally intended to work out by the beginning of this week. This is because the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)-led administration has not yet reached consensus on whether it should set a goal of eliminating all nuclear power stations by the 2030s.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said the government will set a basic direction for its new energy and environment strategy by the end of this week. We urge the government to clearly set a goal of ending Japan's reliance on atomic power based on a convincing road map.

In discussions on Japan's new energy strategy, particular attention is focused on the nuclear fuel cycle project, in which plutonium is extracted from spent nuclear fuel and used in fast-breeder reactors. The project has been regarded as the core of Japan's nuclear power policy goal. However, the completion of the construction of a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant at Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, originally scheduled for 1997, has been postponed 18 times, and construction costs have increased to nearly three times the

initial estimate. There is no prospect that the "Monju" fast-breeder nuclear reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, can be put into commercial use in the foreseeable future because of repeated technical problems including a fire.

It is desirable to discontinue the nuclear fuel cycle project in view of its feasibility, profitability and safety. There is absolutely no need for the continuation of the project if the government aims to achieve a society without nuclear power stations in the wake of the accident at the tsunami-stricken Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant.

There are calls urging that the nuclear fuel cycle project, which uses plutonium, be maintained to leave the possibility of developing, producing and possessing nuclear weapons in the future. Such an idea is dubbed as a "potential nuclear deterrence." However, such calls are far from convincing the public that Japan should maintain the nuclear fuel cycle project.

Japan's possession of nuclear arms would constitute its denial of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and could isolate the country from the rest of the world like the case with North Korea. If other countries were to impose sanctions against Japan in retaliation for possessing nuclear bombs, such as a ban on exports of energy, Japan could not survive as it relies heavily on other countries for natural resources. It is technically difficult to conduct nuclear tests in such a small territory, and the United States, which protects Japan with its nuclear umbrella, would take Japan's possession of such weapons of mass destruction as going against the Japan-U.S. alliance. **The negative impact of Japan's possession of nuclear arms is immeasurable considering that it could lead to nuclear arms expansion in Asia.**

Still, advocates of the maintenance of the nuclear fuel cycle project argue there is no guarantee that the Japan-U.S. alliance will continue permanently, and that leaving the possibility of developing nuclear weapons in the future would be a diplomatic bargaining chip. It is true that some in Japan's political and diplomatic worlds insist that an end to the nuclear fuel cycle project would mean Japan would lose its potential nuclear deterrence.

However, preparations for uncertainty in the future international military environment can hardly justify calls for continuation of the nuclear fuel cycle project. Japan can win confidence from the international community if it declares that it will never be a nuclear power and takes the lead in nuclear arms reductions, rather than being obsessed with potential nuclear deterrence.

Mainichi poll: 60% in favour of gov't no nuke policy

September 17, 2012

60 percent support gov't policy of seeking to eliminate nuclear power: Mainichi poll

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120917p2a00m0na011000c.html>

A majority of the public, some 60 percent, support the government's policy of seeking to eliminate all nuclear power stations by the 2030s, far above the 36 percent who do not, a recent Mainichi poll shows.

By gender, 54 percent of men and 64 percent of women said they are in favor of the zero nuclear power policy.

By party affiliation, supporters of the largest opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are almost evenly divided between those who support the non-atomic power policy and those who are against the policy, 46 percent and 48 percent, respectively. The majority of those who back other parties are in favor of the zero atomic power policy.

Most members of the public, 73 percent, appreciate the government's recent purchase of three of the Senkaku Islands in Ishigaki, Okinawa Prefecture, which are also claimed by China, from their Japanese landowner. The ratio is far above the 22 percent that said they do not support the move.

About half, 51 percent, said the leaders of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the LDP should maintain their agreement with New Komeito on the integrated reform of the tax and social security systems, centering on an increase in the consumption tax rate from the current 5 percent to 8 percent, and then to 10 percent.

The figure is above the 38 percent who said the heads of the two major parties no longer have to respect the three-party accord.

Seventy-one percent of DPJ supporters and 60 percent of LDP supporters said the party leaders should maintain the agreement. Those who support Nippon Ishin-no-kai (Japan Restoration Party), a new party to be launched by Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, were almost equally divided over the issue, with 47 percent saying the DPJ and LDP leaders should respect the three-party agreement and 48 percent replying that the party leaders should no longer be bound by the accord.

"Put the toys away, boys"

Let's put the nuclear arms away 'in a cupboard'

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ea20121008gd.html>

By GWYNNE DYER

LONDON — The major powers have all had their nuclear weapons on permanent alert, ready to launch in minutes or hours, for the past 40 years. Changes in the level of political risk, even the end of the Cold War, have had little or no effect on that.

But wouldn't it be safer and cheaper to "simply put (the nuclear deterrent) away in a cupboard and keep it as a contingency in case there were ever to be a deterioration in the global security picture"?

In terms of orthodox strategic thinking, that is heresy. But the man who made that heretical suggestion was Sir Nick Harvey, until last month the defense minister in charge of the British government's nuclear capability review.

Replaced in the recent Cabinet reshuffle, Harvey is now free to speak his mind. At last week's Liberal Democratic Party conference, he did precisely that, saying that he "wanted his legacy to be bringing the United Kingdom down the nuclear ladder" — although, he admitted, "we might struggle to persuade the British public to get off the ladder altogether."

It isn't just the British public that loves its nukes. The American, Russian and French publics would be equally reluctant to give up their nuclear deterrent forces, even though they face no plausible threat of a nuclear war. (The Chinese public isn't really paying attention yet.) But maybe you could at least persuade the great powers to put the damned things away, and Britain would be a good place to start.

The orthodoxy still says that every self-respecting great power must have its nuclear weapons on permanent alert, in order to deter a surprise attack by some other nuclear power. Nuclear "Pearl Harbors" allegedly lie in wait around every corner. But, as Harvey told The Guardian newspaper, "If you can just break yourself out of that frankly almost lunatic mind-set for a second, all sorts of alternatives start to look possible, indeed credible."

What drove Harvey into this bold assertion was the fact that Britain can no longer afford its nuclear deterrent. It will have to replace its current fleet of four Trident II ballistic-missile submarines by 2028, and the estimated cost is \$20 to \$30 billion. That's less than two weeks' worth of American military spending, but for Britain it would mean cutting deeply into every other area of the defense budget.

The British Army is "driving around in vehicles which are literally about to fall to pieces," he said. The navy needs a new fleet of frigates, and the air force is committed to buying the joint strike fighter. They can't have it all, and some senior officers are asking: "Is the opportunity cost of having a new generation of nuclear weapons too high, in terms of what it would prevent us doing on other fronts."

So what are the alternatives to eternal hair-trigger readiness for an attack nobody really expects to come? You could just get rid of all your nuclear weapons, of course, and you'd probably be just as safe as you are now. But if you can't get your head around the idea of nuclear nakedness, you could at least store your magical cloak in the closet, safely out of the reach of foolish children.

What Harvey was actually proposing was that Britain should get rid of its missile-firing submarines when they get too old, and rely on a few cruise missiles with nuclear warheads to keep everybody else honest. Store them somewhere safe, and don't take them out unless the international situation dramatically worsened.

In fact, why not do that right now?

Those "boomers" — nuclear-powered submarines carrying long-range ballistic missiles with multiple nuclear warheads — were really designed for "retaliation from the grave" if all the owner's cities, military bases, ports and hamburger stands were destroyed in a massive surprise nuclear attack. Does anybody expect such a thing in the current era? Well, then ...

And the best thing about putting the nukes in the cupboard is that you eliminate the risk of ugly accidents. In 2009 two boomers, one British and the other French, actually collided underwater. Even at a time in world history when no great power fears attack by any other, it would have been a frightening event if those two submarines had been American and Chinese.

So put the toys away, boys. Don't expect the Israelis, the Indians and the Pakistanis to follow suit, because they live in parts of the world where full-scale war with a powerful enemy is still a possibility. But together they have only about 500 nuclear weapons; the five nuclear-armed great powers have around 11,000. Somebody has to start, and Britain is the likeliest candidate of the five. Sir Nick Harvey lost his job in the Cabinet reshuffle, but the "nuclear capability review" is still underway.

Even Britain's generals think that another generation of fully deployed missile-firing submarines would deprive them of most of the other new weapons they want, so the issue will stay on the table. Dumping the boomers and locking the remaining nuclear warheads in the cupboard would be a useful halfway house on the way to getting rid of them entirely.

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

"A major problem for our democracy"

November 7, 2012

Organizer wanted to use Hibiya as starting point

Antinuclear activists denied use of park

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121107a3.html>

By SETSUKO KAMIYA

Staff writer

A protest march planned for this Sunday in Tokyo to call for the abolishment of nuclear power has been canceled due to the metropolitan government's rejection for the organizer to use Hibiya Park in Chiyoda Ward as a meeting point.

The metropolitan government's decision late last month has been upheld by the Tokyo District and High courts.

The organizer, Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which has been running the weekly rallies in front of the prime minister's office, decided Monday night to cancel the march. The group had been expecting some 10,000 participants.

The organizer was planning to have participants meet in a plaza in Hibiya Park before taking to the streets. Their route was to take them past the headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Co.

The organizer is still planning to hold a big rally from 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday around the prime minister's office, the Diet building and ministry buildings in the Kasumigaseki district. The group is hoping to attract about 1 million people to join that event.

"The courts don't understand the significance and the nature of the demonstrations taking place after March 11 (last year,)" said Nobuo Kojima, the lead attorney for a group of lawyers representing the rally organizer.

"I think the courts are still afraid of demonstrations, but these are very well organized, and the large number wouldn't hinder other people's use of the park," he said.

In major rallies held in March and July this year, participants were able to meet in Hibiya Park before holding marches. They had submitted applications to the park office to use a park plaza as the starting point.

But when the coalition submitted an application in late October for Sunday's march, the park office denied them use of the space. The officials said a large turnout could hinder management of the park, as there are several other events planned there for the same day.

According to Tetsuya Shikada, head of the parks division of the metropolitan government, the park has had a rule that demonstration gatherings can only be held in Hibiya Public Hall and Hibiya Music Hall, and not in other parts of the park.

Shikada admitted that the park office had failed to properly screen the organizer's applications on the previous two occasions. He said the rally organizer may have "mistook" the submission of the application as being equal to having received approval, which was not the case.

After the rally in late July, the metropolitan government received complaints from officials at Hibiya Library, which is located inside the park, that the large turnout prevented library users from entering the building and caused other problems. Shikada said the park office is now applying the rules more carefully.

"The public halls were already booked for this coming Sunday by other groups. We encouraged the rally organizer to use the halls the following week, or use other parks as alternatives. We don't mean to deny people's freedom of expression or their right to rally," Shikada said.

The group brought their case to the Tokyo District Court and demanded that the metropolitan government allow them to use the park as a meeting point. But the court said no, ruling that it was reasonable for the government to say that the large turnout may affect other park users.

The group appealed, but the Tokyo High Court also rejected the plaintiff's claim Monday.

Lawyer Kojima said that the change in the metropolitan government's attitude is a sign that they want to control people's opportunities to hold demonstrations. "It seems to me that they want to control the number of rallies there, even though there is enough space. This is violation of freedom of speech, and it's a major problem for our democracy," he said.

What about freedom of assembly?

November 9, 2012

10,000-strong anti-nuclear rally from Hibiya Park canceled

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20121109p2a00m0na013000c.html>

A planned anti-nuclear power march around the Diet Building in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward for Nov. 11 has been canceled because of the metropolitan government's refusal to allow the use of Hibiya Park.

Reversing an earlier policy to permit rally organizers to use Hibiya Park as a venue for participants, the Tokyo government has tightened regulations and the organizers of the planned march have failed to find a venue to accommodate participants. The new policy has drawn fire from anti-nuclear protesters as weekly anti-nuclear rallies in front of the prime minister's office continue.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which has been spearheading the weekly rallies in front of the prime minister's office, has decided to cancel the Nov. 11 march in which the organizer had hoped to attract about 10,000 participants.

The organizers started big rallies from a corner of Hibiya Park in March and July this year.

It applied to the metropolitan government in September for use of Hibiya Park as the starting point of the Nov. 11 rally but the government explained the new policy under which the rally organizer needs to get permission rather than simply submitting an application. As a condition for permission, the government asked the rally organizer to use either Hibiya Public Hall or Hibiya Music Hall. Both facilities cost about 80,000 yen to 250,000 yen for four hours.

The organizers protested the regulation change and submitted an application again at the end of October. But the government turned down the request, saying both facilities were fully booked for Nov. 11 and it cannot ensure the safety of ordinary visitors to the park.

The Tokyo District Court and Tokyo High Court spurned the coalition's petition, forcing the coalition to cancel the planned rally.

According to the metropolitan government's Park Division, it recommended the organizers use Shiba Park, about 1.5 kilometers away from Hibiya Park, as the starting point but the organizers insisted on using Hibiya Park, saying Shiba Park would be a hassle for families and elderly people.

Tetsuya Shikada, chief of the Park Division, told the Mainichi Shimbun that staff at Hibiya Park used to accept applications in the past but organizers of such rallies are initially required to get permission in accordance with the metropolitan government's regulations.

He said the Tokyo government has strengthened regulations in the aftermath of the July rally which the organizer says attracted about 27,000 people. He added that demonstrations involving around 100 people do not require permission.

Nobuo Kojima, a lawyer representing the anti-nuclear coalition, criticized the Tokyo government for tightening the regulations including the use of facilities like Hibiya Public Hall and Hibiya Music Hall as a condition for holding demonstrations. "Large-scale demonstrations cannot be held if there is no money. Freedom of assembly could be jeopardized."

Ikuko Gono, associate professor of politics at Takachiho University and author of a book on protests, says demonstrations for many years have started from Hibiya Park as a symbol of Japan's postwar democracy. The metropolitan government's stiffer regulations against demonstrations are tantamount to a denial of postwar history, he says.

Public discontent must express itself

November 11, 2012

Let them march

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ed20121111a2.html>

Anti-nuclear activists were denied use of Hibiya Park by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government last week. The organizer of the planned rally, Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, has been holding weekly rallies in front of the prime minister's office, and the rally set for Nov. 11 was to start in Hibiya Park before marching past the head office of Tokyo Electric Power Co. Most unfortunately, given the constitutional implications, both the Tokyo District Court and the Tokyo High Court sided with the government last week.

The reasons for denying the coalition use of the park were trivial. In previous rallies held in March and July, Hibiya Park was open to demonstrators, but this time, the officials said the turnout could hinder park management, affect visitors and block access to Hibiya Library. The officials say the rules are now being applied more strictly. More likely, the park officials are complicit in an attempt by the metropolitan government to curb the demonstrations.

The previous rallies were held in a reasonable and orderly fashion. Perhaps some park or library users had to walk a few extra steps around the large numbers of demonstrators, but that and the noise are hardly anything special in a bustling city like Tokyo.

If bothering people were the litmus test for allowing or rejecting applications for rallies, there would be no place inside the crowded confines of Tokyo to hold a rally of any kind whatsoever.

One wonders where the pressure comes from for the sudden enforcement of such petty rules. Anytime a demonstration or protest rally takes place, there will be some kind of conflict. The right to freedom of expression often entails some minor disturbances to some people. That is one of the results of exercising the right to freedom of speech. It isn't always quiet. But such disturbances should not be used as an excuse to curb the right to freedom of expression because it is the foundation of democracy.

Significant public discontent over the dangers of nuclear power demands access to venues for expression. Tokyo's public areas are excellent places for that expression. The magnitude of opposition to nuclear power deserves to be heard. Whatever one's opinion on the future of nuclear power in Japan, the rejection of this application should be understood as a restriction on freedom of speech and expression, even though metropolitan officials claim otherwise.

Denying this reasonable application by citizens to demonstrate in a public space will unlikely be more than a small obstacle in the ongoing wave of discontent with nuclear power. But it's an obstacle that should not be there at all.

"Anti-nuclear protesters turned out in droves"

Very little information in the media about yesterday's anti-nuke demonstration in Tokyo...

November 12, 2012

100,000 protest against nuclear power in central Tokyo



Anti-nuclear protesters stage a demonstration through the rain near the Diet building on the evening of Nov. 11. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20121112p2a00m0na006000c.html>

Some 100,000 people staged a demonstration near the Diet Building on the rainy evening of Nov. 11 to call for an end to nuclear power, according to figures released by demonstration organizer Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes.

"We don't need nuclear power!" chanted people who had gathered simultaneously at nine locations in the government quarter, including in front of the prime minister's office. The crowd began assembling at the main meeting point in front of the Diet at just after 5 p.m. and soon the pavement was packed with people. At one point, there were so many protesters packed into one place they disrupted use of the local crosswalks.

"The number of people at the weekly Friday protests has been going down with the temperature," said Haruomi Hanada, a 47-year-old Tokyo man with his 10-year-old daughter in tow. "I was worried people were starting to care less about the issue, but I'm relieved to see so many people here today."

A demonstration scheduled for the capital's Hibiya Park the same day was cancelled after the Tokyo Metropolitan Government refused to issue a permit.

See also:

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201211120071

Anti-nuclear protesters turned out in droves Nov. 11 to mark 20 months since the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdkgADaNC40&feature=em-unknown>

<http://www.sipa.com/en/feature/2461444/japan-anti-nuclear-rally/page/1/SN/NEWS>

A no-nuke song

Nuclear professionals & some media want us to sleep, so we made a lullaby ...
Here a version with english subtitles <http://youtu.be/dKOACjyOthU>

See also : http://www.cipaudio.com/eng_label_USO.htm

Save Japanese children from radiation

<http://www.save-children-from-radiation.org/>

Support the evacuation of Japanese children and accountability for their radiation contamination November 29, 2012

<image: http://www.beyondnuclear.org/storage/Fukushima-meltdown-March-2011-via-AFP.jpg?_SQUARESPACE_CACHEVERSION=1354194683516>

The World Network for Saving Children from Radiation is circulating two urgent petitions for action involving children and radioactive contamination from the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear disaster. Now, more than one and a half years after the nuclear accident, 260,000 Japanese children are still living in the catastrophe's radioactive contamination. One petition is directs Japanese authorities to evacuate children to non-contaminated areas of the country. The other petition calls for justice and accountability following the widely recognized "man-made" nuclear disaster for which to date not one single person has been held accountable.

To find out more and how to lend your signature in support of a more healthy future for Japanese children caught in the Fukushima contamination please go to <http://www.save-children-from-radiation.org/petitions/>

Antinukes and the election

December 6, 2012

Nuclear foes face election dilemma

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121206f2.html>

By MIYA TANAKA
Kyodo

Tokyo fashion designer Yasuko Maruko, 44, is an absolute beginner when it comes to becoming a politician, yet she is bidding for a seat in the Diet in the Dec. 16 general election in the hope of steering Japan toward a future without nuclear power.

United: People hold signs reading "Protect Children" and "No to Nuclear Power" during an antinuclear energy rally near the prime minister's office in July. KYODO



Getting together the ¥6 million deposit for her candidacy was not easy for Maruko, a mother of two daughters. But the main purpose of her attempt is to show that the country's growing antinuclear grassroots movement is heading to the next stage of sending people to the Diet, following massive protests after the Fukushima No. 1 plant meltdown crisis started last year.

"I thought I needed to get involved in politics because after all, collecting petition signatures and joining demonstrations and rallies will not bring about major changes in government policies," she said.

But it remains uncertain to what extent the momentum of the antinuclear movement will show in the form of actual votes in the Lower House election, with some experts pointing to the lack of a new party that can attract nuclear opponents en masse.

"Many voters, including those who are concerned about nuclear issues, are fed up with established parties. But the moves made by new parties have also been confusing, with their images tarnished by joining hands with some old elements of Japanese politics," said Aiji Tanaka, a political science professor at Waseda University.

Major players in the general election, the first since 2009, include the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party and two new forces — Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), founded by high-profile Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, and Nippon Mirai no To (Tomorrow Party of Japan) launched by Shiga Gov. Yukiko Kada only about a week before the start of official campaigning Tuesday.

Moves to create the new group led by Kada accelerated after Hashimoto was seen to water down his antinuclear stance as a result of merging his party with a party led by former Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara, who is against the elimination of nuclear power and has even suggested Japan pursue the bomb.

Kada's party brings together small parties that share her tough stance against nuclear power. Her call for Japan to "graduate from nuclear power in 10 years" is a more aggressive antinuclear stance than that of the DPJ, which aims to phase out nuclear energy by the 2030s and that of the LDP, which is against total abolition.

But what has stirred controversy is that she plans to team up with Ichiro Ozawa, a former DPJ head dubbed the "destroyer" for his history of forming and breaking up political parties.

Tanaka said Ozawa's existence may make Nippon Mirai no To less attractive to voters who want to back candidates from a party promising a nuclear-free country.

"People seriously concerned about nuclear power may hesitate to choose the party, wondering whether Ozawa had ever been a nuclear opponent when he was the LDP's secretary general or a DPJ member. . . . His motivation is probably to use Kada's party as a tool to hold the casting vote in the political arena (in the event that neither the LDP nor the DPJ wins a majority)," he said.

Toshiro Kojima, an environmental policy professor at Aoyama Gakuin University, thinks having Ozawa is not necessarily a disadvantage because he has party management ability and usually sticks to what he says, but noted there may be concerns that Kada may end up as his puppet.

In a sign that voters are facing difficult choices, people who gathered in front of the prime minister's office on Nov. 30 for one of the Friday night antinuclear demonstrations varied on which party they plan to support.

Some said they will vote for Nippon Mirai no To candidates, but a 32-year-old company employee from Chiba Prefecture, Yuki Shimotake, said she plans to vote for the Japanese Communist Party for the first time because she wants to see nuclear power eliminated immediately, and not over a 10-year span as advocated by Kada.

Meanwhile, another 37-year-old woman, who asked not to be named because she is a part-time civil servant, said she has not yet decided which party to back.

She also said she remains doubtful whether antinuclear movements among ordinary citizens will affect the outcome of the election.

"When I come here (to join the demonstrations), I feel there is a lively mood. But there is a difference in the degree of enthusiasm when I meet my acquaintances. Many of them look like they have given up about their future," she said.

Maruko, a regular attendant of the weekly rallies, has secured the backing of Kada's party to run in a single-seat constituency in Tokyo, and hopes the poll will bring change to a country that appears to be having difficulty in ending its reliance on nuclear energy, with two reactors in Fukui Prefecture restarted last summer, despite the total shutdown of all other reactors in Japan.

"What I always say in my stump speeches is that each vote counts to make a change. We cannot miss this opportunity," she said.

Anti-nuke demonstration in Tokyo

December 15, 2012

Tokyo rally seeks to keep alive quest to end nuclear power

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121215x2.html>

By KAZUAKI NAGATA
Staff writer

FUKUSHIMA — With energy policy turning into one of the focal points of Sunday's Lower House election, more than 1,000 people opposed to atomic power staged a march in Tokyo on the eve of the poll to demand a nuclear-free society.

"Japan will face a crossroads tomorrow," Yuko Tanaka, a professor at Hosei University, told a crowd of hundreds who gathered in Hibiya Park, Chiyoda Ward, on Saturday ahead of the march.

"Depending on the result of the election, I feel that Japan could wind up in hell," she said, voicing fears that the final tally may fail to reflect the views of many citizens who want to see Japan's nuclear plants scrapped.

The Liberal Democratic Party, which media polls show will oust the ruling Democratic Party of Japan and form the next government, has pledged to make efforts to reduce the country's addiction to atomic energy, but it is not promising to do away with nuclear plants altogether. The party oversaw the creation and expansion of Japan's atomic power industry during its long postwar rule.

The DPJ and many other parties contesting the election have meanwhile set the medium-term goal of eliminating all nuclear power plants as a key tenet of their platforms.

Hosei University's Tanaka said she hopes an antinuclear party wins Sunday so her fellow activists won't have to continue staging such rallies after the election. However, she is pessimistic about the final outcome.

Other protesters believe the demonstrations that have sprung up nationwide to oppose atomic energy since the start of the Fukushima No. 1 disaster should continue, regardless of the poll results.

"No matter which party takes power, we must not lower our voices for the abolition of nuclear power," said Satoshi Kamata, a writer who has long warned of the dangers of atomic energy.

Kamata believes the antinuclear energy movement has significantly impacted society, and noted most candidates running in the election are campaigning on a promise to end Japan's dependence on nuclear power.

After assembling in Hibiya Park, the demonstrators rallied to the high-end Ginza shopping district despite rainy, chilly weather.

In addition to the rally, Japanese and overseas opponents of nuclear energy started the two-day Global Conference for a Nuclear Power Free World in Hibiya to discuss such issues as Japan's atomic regulatory system and what politics and tactics to pursue in order to achieve a society free of atomic energy.

The conference, which activists from at least nine countries are attending, overlaps with a global nuclear safety gathering that also began Saturday in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, hosted by Japan and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Although the two events happened to coincide, organizers of the Hibiya conference said this presents an ideal opportunity to further their cause, by emphasizing the importance of abandoning atomic energy.

"It seems that the goal of scrapping nuclear power is not being taken seriously (in the election). . . . So the significance of the conference is really big and I think we will be able to send a strong message to the electorate," said Tatsuya Yoshioka, an organizer and director of nongovernmental organization Peace Boat.

The inaugural Global Conference for a Nuclear Power Free World, held in Yokohama in January, drew some 11,500 participants.

Rock music against nukes

December 18, 2012

'Music doesn't need nuclear power': Rock guitarist excited about 'solar concert'



Taiji Sato (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20121218p2a00m0na003000c.html>

"We don't need nuclear energy to play good music" claimed 45-year-old rock guitarist, Taiji Sato, organizer of the forthcoming "The Solar Budokan" concert. Sato spoke to the Mainichi Shimbun in an interview about his motivation behind the Dec. 20 event, during which all necessary power will be generated entirely by renewable energy.

Inspired by The Beatles, Sato started playing electric guitar when he was a junior high school student. He formed a band in college and has devoted himself to rock music ever since. Sato's wild guitar technique has attracted young crowds. Just as he was thinking of taking his skills to the big stage, the Great East Japan Earthquake struck in March 2011. Since then, he has held concerts in Tokyo's Shimokitazawa to support disaster recovery.

The concert will run on renewable energy: instruments will use batteries charged by solar power, stage lights will be fueled by biodiesel, and speakers and other power on stage will be provided indirectly by solar energy through the purchase of renewable energy certificates.

Japanese big-time musicians such as Tamio Okuda, Koji Kikkawa and Fumiya Fujii are all willing to act as warm up artists for the concert. Even legendary Japanese singer Tokiko Kato offered to help. "It will be a concert for all ages and genders," says Sato, as he expresses his excitement.

On Dec. 16, the same date as the general election, Sato joined an anti-nuclear power event at Hibiya Park in downtown Tokyo. Sato and his supporters believe in the power of music that doesn't require nuclear energy.

Hakodate to file suit to stop construction of Oma plant

December 19, 2012

Hakodate OKs budget to sue if work resumes on Aomori nuclear plant

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121219b2.html>

Kyodo

HAKODATE, Hokkaido — The municipal assembly of Hakodate, Hokkaido, approved funds Tuesday to file a lawsuit to stop construction of a nuclear plant in nearby Aomori Prefecture.

The city is considering resorting to legal action if Electric Power Development Co., better known as J-Power, continues construction of the plant in Oma across the Tsugaru Strait from Hakodate.

Hakodate officials believe the safety of the plant can't be guaranteed and the city could suffer severe damage in the event of a serious accident.

The municipality will ask the new administration to be formed under the leadership of the Liberal Democratic Party, which won a landslide victory in Sunday

Hakodate set aside ¥23 million in reserve funds under a supplementary budget for the current fiscal year for the potential lawsuit. It would be the first suit related to a nuclear plant filed by a local government.

Although separated by the strait, Hakodate lies within 30 km of the plant. J-Power began building the plant in May 2008 with the intention of bringing it online in November 2014. Construction was suspended after the Fukushima nuclear crisis in March 2011 but was resumed this fall.

When the work restarted, Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo told a news conference that "we hope to pursue legal action, in which the city will become the plaintiff, as early as next spring when the construction work is to move into high gear."

Pushing nuclear power

JJI

The head of the nation's power industry is demanding that the new government step back from its predecessor's goal of ridding Japan of nuclear power.

In a statement Monday on the Liberal Democratic Party's landslide victory in the Lower House election, Makoto Yagi, chairman of the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan, said he wants the incoming government to work out a "realistic" national energy policy.

Departing Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda set a goal of reducing the nation's dependence on nuclear power to zero by the 2030s.

There are too many challenges to overcome before achieving the nuclear phaseout goal, Yagi said.

December 18, 2012

City budget approved for lawsuit to stop nuclear plant construction

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20121218p2g00m0dm077000c.html>

Unrelenting protests

December 22, 2012

Anti-nuclear protests continue on theme of nonviolence

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201212220007

By KAZUYA MATSUMOTO/ Staff Writer

They're angry, frustrated and persistent. Some have been influenced by past movements in Japan. Others say they are reacting to what they perceive as slights by the government.

But the various anti-nuclear groups that continue to protest throughout Japan have managed to create a peaceful, welcoming atmosphere that has helped to prevent the movement from fading away.

"The common thread they share is the concept of 'nonviolence,'" said political scientist Ikuo Gono, 33. "Because the (protest) sites are nonviolent, anybody can join. The festival-like atmosphere created by the rhythm of the drums and the like also lowers the hurdles to engaging in a demonstration or protest."

Gono said movements in Japan have traditionally centered on students or laborers.

"Now people from every generation, from children to seniors, and from all social backgrounds are voluntarily participating," he said.

One of the more visible anti-nuclear groups is the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which consists of 13 citizen organizations that arrange demonstrations outside the prime minister's office every Friday night.

The protests began in late March this year with about 300 people, but it jumped to more than 10,000 in June, when the Noda Cabinet decided to restart the Oi reactors operated by Kansai Electric Power Co. in Fukui Prefecture. Since then, the crowds have continued to grow, and the protests have spread to government offices in Tokyo's Kasumigaseki district, where the sounds of drums and chants of "no restarts" echo.

"The protesters are regular people. That's why, more than anything else, our goal is safe operation," Misao Redwolf, one of the main organizers, said. "We will continue in a safe and persistent manner to voice our opposition to nuclear power as many times as we need to."

Redwolf is the professional alias she uses in her day job as an illustrator. Five years ago, after traveling around the United States, Britain and Italy, she got involved in the anti-nuclear movement.

She also designed the star-shaped logo of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes.

"I sympathized with the attitude of the Ouetsu Reppan Domei (a military-political coalition) that opposed the government during the Meiji Restoration. I wanted to carry on their spirit and their 'gobosei' (five-pointed star) mark gave me an idea," she said.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes sets some basic rules for the protests, such as: no message other than abolishing nuclear power; no affiliations with political parties or other organizations; and a maximum one minute of talking time at the microphone.

"The anti-nuclear movement has a bright outlook. But democracy has not yet been rehabilitated in Japanese society. Now is a critical moment," Redwolf said

Many anti-nuclear protests in Japan are called "sound demos." The protesters play drums and other musical instruments while they march through the streets of towns accompanied by rock or rap music.

Artist Kaya Hanasaki, a member of Shienkin Girls (Aid Money Girls), collected donations to help the disaster-hit city of Minami-Soma in Fukushima Prefecture at a demonstration organized by Shiroto no Ran, a recycled goods dealer in Tokyo's Koenji district.

Hanasaki created oil paintings when she studied at Tama Art University before attending the graduate school of Tokyo University of the Arts. At a London gallery in the summer this year, she used audio and visual recordings from Fukushima in a performance called "3/11," the date the Great East Japan Earthquake struck last year.

The production earned positive reviews.

Hanasaki's involvement in demonstrations and performance art continues. She has also worked with people from the Occupy movement in the United States.

"Since 3/11, there are more opportunities for students and young people to engage in daily conversation about politics," she said. "Demonstrations have become frequent in towns, and I feel like society might be changing a little at a time."

The Sayonara Nukes 100,000 Rally, a gathering of citizens who want to phase out nuclear power, was held in July. Organizers said about 170,000 people from across Japan packed into the site at Tokyo's Yoyogi Park.

Author Keiko Ochiai, 67, received loud applause when she said: "We will not falter. We question the Noda administration. When you speak of 'the people,' just who are you thinking of? 'The people' -- citizens -- are here today."

Hirofumi Harada, 45, of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, said he is often asked by reporters if the protests outside the prime minister's office represent a "new social movement."

He said he feels the answer is "no."

"I think the anti-nuclear movement since 3/11 is similar to protests during the pollution at the Ashio Copper Mine (in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) and the controversy over Minamata disease," Harada said. **"By nature, people take to the streets when they're angry. That's why there's nothing new about such movements. They're universal."**

Unrelenting protests (2)

December 22, 2012

Opponents of nuclear power vow to continue protests under new government

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201212220052>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear protesters who have been gathering for months each Friday near the prime minister's office continued expressing their opposition Dec. 21 in an effort to underscore their cause after the Liberal Democratic Party scored a landslide victory in the Lower House election.

Chants of "No reactor restarts," accompanied by the sounds of drum beats, echoed in Tokyo's Nagatacho district at 6 p.m. on Dec. 21, the winter solstice.

The rally marked the 36th such demonstration, according to Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, organizer of the protests.

"We will never forgive the government for its decision to restart reactors," said one protester.

"The outgoing administration should have its successor take over its 'zero nuclear power policy,'" said another.

Twenty-year-old participant Tatsuya Hashizawa, who holds a part-time job in Tokyo, said it was the first time in six months he had attended the rally, but he decided to give it his support once more after being alarmed by the LDP's return to power. "If we are to push for a no-nuclear future, everyone should think hard and raise their voices," he said.

Hashizawa said he voted in the Dec. 16 Lower House election for a party and a candidate both of whom are committed to the abolition of nuclear power. It was the first time he had ever voted.

Also present was a 68-year-old female evacuee from Futaba, a town near the stricken Fukushima No. 1 plant. Now living in Tokyo, she stressed the importance of keeping up the pressure.

"The LDP promoted nuclear power generation," she said, holding a placard that read: "Return Futaba to us."

"Who can we turn to?" she said. "We need to carry on our protest rallies to prevent the LDP from becoming big-headed."

The woman said she had been a regular participant of the rallies, attending nearly every one to date.

Demonstrations in front of the prime minister's office began after opponents of nuclear power became increasingly frustrated by what they considered to be inaction by the administration of the Democratic Party of Japan over nuclear power.

They felt that the DPJ administration was too hesitant to steer the country boldly away from nuclear power despite raised public anxiety over the safety of nuclear plants.

The rallies were strongest this summer after the administration of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda approved the restart of two reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

That decision triggered a rally by tens of thousands of protesters in the capital and demonstrations at dozens of other locations across the country.

It was the first time in many years that protesters had taken to the streets in such numbers, and it led to the prime minister inviting representatives of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes for talks.

A short while later, the Noda administration declared it would abolish nuclear power in Japan by the end of the 2030s.

A 29-year-old man who is one of the coalition's central organizers said he is glad the group's efforts have drawn widespread attention. But he said taking a different approach might have won more support.

"We should have presented the implications of nuclear power from a logical point of view, rather than merely appeal to people's emotions," he said.

The latest rally, like those before it, saw participants take turns in addressing the crowd through a microphone. It petered out at 8 p.m. Police sources said nearly 1,000 people had taken part.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes says the demonstrations will continue next year, as the new government settles into office.

Protesters in other cities have mounted similar protests. Rallies have taken place outside the headquarters of Kansai Electric in Osaka and that of Kyushu Electric Power Co. in Fukuoka.

"Casting a ballot is not the only right we have. Coming here and having our voices heard is meaningful, too," said one of the Osaka protest organizers.

The conservative Liberal Democratic Party will take power next week. It has in the past been a standard-bearer for nuclear power and has spoken in only vague terms about Japan's atomic future since winning the recent Lower House election.

Now, more than ever, these protesters believe their voices need to be heard.



Anti-nuclear demonstrators protest outside the prime minister's office in Tokyo's Nagatacho district on Dec. 21. (Soichiro Yamamoto)

A very short-lived party

December 27, 2012

Antinuclear Tomorrow Party of Japan to split over internal feud 1 month after launch

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20121227p2a00m0na008000c.html>

Just one month after its hasty launch ahead of the Dec. 16 House of Representatives election, the anti-nuclear power Tomorrow Party of Japan (TPJ) is set to break apart in the face of internal wrangling over key party posts including one for political heavyweight and powerbroker Ichiro Ozawa.

Shiga Gov. Yukiko Kada, who heads the fledgling TPJ, said at a news conference at the Shiga Prefectural Government's office on Dec. 26, "We are exploring a way to split peacefully." Former Financial Services Minister Shizuka Kamei vowed to leave the party the same day, saying, "The party does not have a sense of unity any longer." The TPJ is likely to come under fire for its internal squabbling only one month after it was launched.

The TPJ has 17 legislators -- nine House of Representatives members and eight House of Councillors members. But 15 of them come from the People's Life First (PLF) party that was headed by Ozawa. Therefore, it remains unclear how the party will split.

The initial internal conflict broke out at a joint meeting of party members of both houses of the Diet on the evening of Dec. 24. Lawmakers who come from PLF turned their back on Kada's proposal to appoint Tomoko Abe, former policy chief of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), as co-leader of the TPJ. The internal feud deepened further as the lawmakers originally from the PLF subsequently moved to pass a motion calling for Ozawa to be named as party co-leader.

Over the nomination for prime minister in a special Diet session, the lawmakers originally from the PLF decided at a Dec. 26 joint meeting of party members of both houses of the Diet to vote for deputy party leader Yuko Mori, while Kada insisted on a free vote. The lawmakers originally from the PLF voted for Mori as prime minister in both houses of the Diet. But Kamei and Tomoko Abe cast blank votes.

Kada announced the launch of the TPJ on Nov. 27. Ozawa had initially expressed his intention not to assume a key party post for the time being, but high expectations began to be placed on him following the party's setback in the Dec. 16 general election.

Tomoko Abe told reporters, "It's a Narita divorce," referring to divorces that occur soon after a honeymoon overseas.

Antinuke demonstrators still there

December 29, 2012

Demonstrators protest Abe Cabinet review of zero nuclear policy

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20121229p2a00m0na008000c.html>

Anti-nuclear energy demonstrators defied the drizzly weather in front of the Prime Minister's Office on the evening of Dec. 28, marking their first weekly protest since the second Abe Cabinet took office earlier this week.

Filling the sidewalks near the premier's office in Tokyo's Nagatacho district, the demonstrators repeatedly chanted, "No to nuclear power" and "Listen to the voices of the people," in protest against the new administration's announced review of the previous Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)-led government's pledge to end nuclear power in Japan by the 2030s.

"Before bringing Japan back to what it was, first bring Fukushima back to us," read one of the placards raised by demonstrators, apparently poking fun at Abe's House of Representatives election campaign slogan of "regaining Japan."

A 64-year-old taxi driver from Tokyo's Edogawa Ward took a day off work to join the protest, thinking, "I should demonstrate my will."

"I wanted to tell the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that it shouldn't think it has gained the confidence of the entire public, as the party garnered less than 30 percent of votes in the proportional representation blocs (in the general election)," he said. "I want them to know that calls for Japan's breakaway from nuclear energy are this strong."

A 30-year-old from the Tokyo suburb of Hino who rushed to the rally after work, said, "The LDP hardly said anything about its nuclear policy during the election campaign, but now it's going to reactivate nuclear reactors, which is absolutely not fair. I will come here again and again (to protest), even after New Year's."

A 42-year-old self-employed woman from Tokyo's Sugunami Ward confided that all she finds naught but disappointment in Japanese politics.

"In this country that caused a nuclear disaster, a party promoting nuclear power has taken control of the government while an anti-nuclear party was split into two," she said. "As for me, I will continue to do what I can. I will keep joining demonstrations" against nuclear power.

The weekly Friday protests in front of the Prime Minister's Office organized by citizens group "Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes" have continued since 2011 in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear meltdowns.

Writers' antinuke pledge

January 11, 2013

Writers pledge to step up calls for nuclear phase-out

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201301110047

By DAISUKE SHIMIZU/ Staff Writer

Four prominent writers including Nobel laureate **Kenzaburo Oe** say they will step up their demand that Japan pulls the plug on nuclear power.

Speaking at a news conference in Tokyo on Jan. 10, Oe said the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is "fundamentally wrong" in seeking to restart idled reactors and resume the reliance on nuclear energy.

Also present were **journalist Satoshi Kamata, writer Hisae Sawachi and writer Keiko Ochiai.**

Ochiai denounced those who support the reliance on nuclear power.

"Are they ready to deceive their own lives and those of people yet to be born, under this talk of 'prosperity' and 'peaceful' use?" she said.

The four--and other activists--are co-founders of a civil advocacy group, the "Citizen's Committee for a 10-Million-People Petition to Say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants."

They said the group would present to the government a five-point action plan at a rally in Tokyo's Meiji Park scheduled for March 9.

It will include the timely scrapping of existing nuclear reactors, a ban on the construction of new units and an all-out push to develop the generation of power from renewable sources.

Anti nuke rally in Tokyo

January 12, 2013

Weekly anti-nuclear rallies resume in central Tokyo

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201301120023

By KATSUMOTO HORIKAWA/ Staff Writer

In their first mass protest this year, anti-nuclear protesters rallied outside the prime minister's office Jan. 11 and denounced the Shinzo Abe administration for failing to commit to reducing Japan's reliance on nuclear energy.

Organizers of the Friday-evening rallies, which began in March 2012 and were held throughout the year, say the protests will continue.

"Abe is putting economic measures first, but those who benefit from spending on public works will be general contractors," said 61-year-old Osamu Ishigaki from Yokohama, who joined the rally straight from work. "Investing in renewable energy would offer better prospects for the overall economy."

The Abe administration has pledged higher spending on projects such as surveys of tunnels, roads and railways and making repairs where needed.

It is also seeking to uphold Japan's reliance on nuclear power, scrapping the previous government's pledge to phase it out by the 2030s.

Like previous rallies, the latest one kicked off at 6 p.m. in the Nagatacho district, the Tokyo neighborhood akin to Washington's Capitol Hill or London's Westminster. It lasted two hours.

Fumi Maeda, a 23-year-old nursery school teacher from Toyohashi, Aichi Prefecture, said she was participating for the first time.

"The LDP wants to maintain the nuclear industry's status quo," she said. "It won the Lower House election, but by taking part in this rally I am hoping to get my friends and relatives interested in the matter."

The rally is organized by a group called the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes.



Anti-nuclear protesters outside the prime minister's office in Tokyo on Jan. 11, the first rally this year.
(Satoru Ogawa)

Exhibit by Takamine

January 25, 2013

Contemporary artist spotlights society's 'oppression' in exhibit

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/cool_japan/culture/AJ201301250037

By NOZOMI MATSUI/ Staff Writer

MITO--Though it's not an association most people would make, Tadasu Takamine's latest exhibition links anime with atomic energy as examples of the "systematic oppression lurking in Japanese society."

"Takamine Tadasu no Cool Japan" (Tadasu Takamine's Cool Japan), on display at Art Tower Mito in Ibaraki Prefecture, takes its name from the popular tagline used to showcase and promote Japanese anime and Japanese street fashion to overseas customers.

"Nuclear power plants and 'Cool Japan' are both things touted by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry," Takamine, 44, says. "They share a kinship as things that are pushed upon us."

He said that he is making a point about the importance of keeping a critical eye on such things.

In the exhibition room titled "Haiso no Heya" (the room of lost lawsuits), rectangular protrusions printed with huge blowups of newspaper headlines jut from the wall. The headlines report on lawsuits related to nuclear power plants, some dating back to the 1970s. "Court ruling snubs citizens," one headline screams, while another declares, "Residents who filed lawsuit lose their case." A clay statue of a woman standing in front of all this symbolizes "people accepting the history of the lawsuits," according to Takamine.

In another room, titled "Gaman no Heya" (the room of sufferance), various voices ring out intermittently with the command, "Bear with it!"

"Japanese society is bound by the unspoken understanding that we just have to lump it at times like this," Takamine said. "That is what is happening now, even after the nuclear power plant accident. I want this exhibition to give people a chance to think about how the Japanese people have been oppressed, subconsciously, all this time."

* * *

On Feb. 16, Takamine will be at the museum to discuss his work. The exhibition runs through Feb. 17. The museum is closed on Mondays.

Chronicles of life in nuclear communities

February 3, 2013

Documentary film examines communities affected by nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20130203p2g00m0et004000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- An upcoming documentary film chronicles the experiences of communities hosting nuclear facilities in Japan, and the high price paid by some of them after the nuclear disaster in 2011, including farmers and fishermen unable to market produce because of radioactive contamination.

"I hope I can show that we cannot coexist with nuclear power and it is the duty of each of us to make a choice about energy in the future," said Kei Shimada, director of "Fukushima, Rokkasho and Message to the Future."

Shimada, originally a Tokyo-based freelance photographer, started covering nuclear issues in the wake of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and eventually settled down in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, which hosts nuclear fuel cycle facilities.

"I wanted to follow the development of the nuclear fuel cycle project on the spot and be close to those living there," Shimada, 53, said.

Her 12 years living in the northeastern village through 2002 resulted in two photo books, one of which won a journalistic award. She was about to start shooting her first movie about Rokkasho when a massive earthquake and tsunami caused Japan's worst ever nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant in Fukushima Prefecture in March 2011.

In the face of the enormity of the event, she changed her original plan and turned her attention to those living in Fukushima in addition to the Rokkasho residents.

One of those the just-completed documentary focuses on is Kazuo Nakamura, a 14th-generation farmer in Koriyama, Fukushima, who has had to pile up the rice harvest at his storehouse as consumers shun Fukushima rice following the detection of radioactive materials in samples.

Joining an antinuclear demonstration in Tokyo while drawing attention to his plight at civic meetings, Nakamura said he is determined to continue to farm despite the hardships he faces.

"I will continue farming even if I have to abandon my crops," he said. "And now I believe it is our duty" to get rid of nuclear facilities, he added, convinced they "will definitely cause harmful effects to our descendents."

In Rokkasho, Eisaku Takiguchi continues to catch Pacific cod with his son despite cesium contamination in the wake of the Fukushima disaster, in order to document the catches he could have made. Their silent chagrin is evident as they are shown throwing the fish back into the ocean from their vessel.

Takiguchi, as a young fisherman, led a protest movement against the construction of nuclear fuel cycle facilities. Decades later, he now says, "I'm still proud of our campaign. I can walk the street with my head held high."

Shimada became acquainted with him while living in Rokkasho. "I have been impressed with him as a person who stood up against a big power."

Takiguchi's son, Kenji, meanwhile, indicates concerns over his future as a fisherman in the village, saying, "I've never done anything (other than fish catch). I would quit this job if I could do anything else."

Shimada also introduced Rokkasho residents in her film who argue that the nuclear facilities have brought jobs and well-kept houses to the village, with a woman involved in the construction business saying, "We are happy here. I wonder what will happen to us if these facilities are terminated."

"It is true that not a few people in Rokkasho think like that," Shimada said. "But I think it means the village has depended on the money brought in exchange for hosting the nuclear fuel cycle facilities."

"The nuclear industry has attempted to win the residents over to its side with money so it can lay down these unwanted facilities in this remote, small village," she said.

Yukie Tanabe is another victim of the Fukushima disaster who appears in the documentary. She had to evacuate from her home, located only 5 kilometers away from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi complex, to Tokyo with her husband and their son amid fears over radiation exposure.

She gave birth to her second son as an evacuee and named him "Fuku," with their home Fukushima in mind. The Chinese character "Fuku" means fortune or blessing.

Despite these hardships imposed on the public, moves to resuscitate the nuclear industry have started emerging since the Liberal Democratic Party-led government was installed in December.

The antinuclear mayor of Tokaimura, Ibaraki Prefecture, Tatsuya Murakami, says in the movie, "People in Japan had consumed massive energy, but they have changed since the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The government, the nuclear industry, as well as business leaders, should be aware of it."

The village promoted itself as a "pioneer" of Japan's nuclear development, since the nation's first research reactor achieved criticality there in 1957.

Shimada, who describes herself as a "nonprofessional person in filmmaking," said she was supported by many people, including graduates from film school, in making the documentary.

A group was formed to support her project and collected around 3.5 million yen in donations to finance the film, mostly from members of the public.

"I received larger-than-expected donations apparently because this project started shortly after the nuclear crisis in Fukushima," she said. "And I'm impressed that many donors attached messages expressing their expectations that this film will show them the reality of nuclear-hosting communities."

Shimada is described by influential antinuclear writer Satoshi Kamata as "one of the journalists who have covered Rokkasho for a long period of time, kept thinking about it and been aware of its danger."

Nevertheless, she said, she was determined that the film would not simply loudly proclaim an antinuclear message, but show a balanced view of life around nuclear facilities.

The film will be screened at community halls and libraries in several cities, including Fukushima, as well as at some universities. The support group is also hoping those interested will organize their own screening opportunities.

The Great Nasuri-tsukeru Hoax

February 3, 2013

Citizens' lack of resolve leaves nuclear door wide open for next disaster

by Roger Pulvers

Special To The Japan Times

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/02/03/commentary/citizens-lack-of-resolve-leaves-nuclear-door-wide-open-for-next-disaster/#.UQ4mE_L1tEs

Second of two parts

Next month we will commemorate the second anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, and the ongoing nuclear calamity that ensued. But the personal tragedies it has brought about will remain on the conscience of the Japanese until those in business and government who are responsible for the nuclear disaster own up to their negligence.

Much as after World War II — when guilt was sublimated and liability evaded — the aftermath of the explosions and meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant has seen a concerted campaign of obfuscation and coverup by business leaders and government officials in what might be called “The Great Nasuri-tsukeru Hoax,” with *nasuri-tsukeru* meaning “shifting the blame to others.”

One person who copped a good portion of that shifted blame is Naoto Kan, prime minister at the time. However, with the publication of a book last year, he intends, in a very clear and logically formulated way, to set the record straight. “My Thoughts as Prime Minister on the Tepco Fukushima Nuclear Plant Accident” records blow-by-blow descriptions of events as they unfolded after the megaquake and tsunami struck on March 11, 2011.

Kan immediately realized that the proposal by Masataka Shimizu, president of Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco), owners and operators of the plant, to withdraw its workers was an invitation to catastrophe.

He called Shimizu to the Prime Minister’s Residence on March 15, telling him, “There will be no withdrawal.” Then he went to Tepco’s head office in Uchisaiwai-cho, a short drive from the Residence, to explain that the headquarters for dealing with the reactors was, with government participation, going to be established there. Tepco owned the plant; they must own the disaster.

“I don’t care how much money it takes,” he told Tepco officials, “Tepco has got to take it on. Withdrawal, when the very existence of Japan is at stake, is out of the question. ... People 60 and over can go to the plant. I’m resolved to go myself if necessary.”

“Tepco’s way of dealing with things,” he writes in his book, “was to wait for something to happen and then react. Their logistics weren’t functioning, particularly at the head office. Even some days after the accident they still hadn’t been able to get batteries and necessary equipment to the plant.

“What is being called into question here,” he continues, “is not just technical issues or economic matters; it is people’s way of life, their civilization. The nuclear accident is a calamity that arose due to a mistaken choice made in the culture as a whole. Discontinuing nuclear power generation is not a technical problem: It is something that depends ultimately on the wishes of the people.”

If this is true, then the wishes of the people as of February 2013 can be said to be “confused” at best. Though opinion polls conducted since the accident have shown a distinct majority of Japanese in favor of the methodical abandonment of nuclear power, a similarly distinct majority opted to vote in a government last December that is openly dedicated to the resurrection of nuclear power generation.

Such conflicted majorities attest to a lack of resolve in the populace, a condition that is easily exploited by powerful interests and a media who meekly follow their lead.

And yet Kan is forthright: “I personally experienced the nuclear accidents on and after March 11,” he writes, “and **I came to the conclusion that it is fundamentally unnatural for humans to exploit nuclear reactions, and that nuclear energy threatens the existence of the human race.**”

As for the issue of his alleged meddling into the affairs of a private company, Kan points out that this was a “severe accident,” and that such a circumstance “comes, without a doubt, under the authority of the prime minister to deal with.”

At 6:14 a.m. on March 12, 2011, he set out by helicopter from the roof of the Residence to visit and inspect the stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. What he saw there “was like a wartime field hospital. ... The corridors were filled with workers, some sleeping on the floor. Some men had blankets wrapped around them, others were bare-chested. They all had the same vacant stare in their eyes.”

Neither Nuclear Safety Commission Chairman Haruki Madarame nor Sakae Muto, then Tepco’s executive vice president in charge of nuclear issues, could answer his questions about the possibility of hydrogen explosions or whether vents would be used to lessen their probability.

Imagine the result in the community — not to mention the world at large — if the prime minister had left men like this totally in charge of a catastrophe about to happen. Would he not have been roundly condemned, then and forever, for shirking the responsibilities of a head of state?

“It was Tepco that, by all rights, should have had the raw data ... but no matter who I asked, no one knew who was making decisions, **no one knew who was in charge.** Everything was done in an atmosphere of anonymity.”

Unlike an accident at a non-nuclear plant, where the fire eventually goes out and the damage is geographically limited, when one occurs at a nuclear plant, writes Kan, “the damage gets worse with time. ... The half-life of plutonium is 24,000 years. ... Japan was being occupied by radiation. The enemy was not attacking from the outside. Japan had given birth to its own mortal enemy. There was no escape.”

In the weeks and months following the accident, Kan became convinced that “there is no such thing as safe nuclear energy. The risk of the state collapsing as a result of an accident is just too great.”

Before the accident, there had been a plan to increase the number of reactors by at least 14 by 2030. By the end of March 2011, Kan had resolved to scrap this plan. Now, though, a new and energized pro-nuclear government has announced that plans for new reactors will go ahead.

“In the last 30-odd years,” writes Kan, “wind power and solar power have been scorned as a nuisance by the electric power companies; and, as a result, we have not been able to create developments in these despite our advanced technological know-how. So we are now way behind European countries in this field.

“We should seize the opportunity given to us by the accident to rethink our basic energy plan from the drawing board onward. I want to make natural forms of energy generation, such as those from the wind and the sun, ‘the next generation’ of Japan’s basic energy sources.”

In June 2011, the prime minister spoke in front of a Diet committee on energy.

“Just being against nuclear energy may have some significance,” he said. “But if such a protest is not part of a rethinking on energy strategies as a whole, we will just be left with a pie in the sky. I aim to link the energy issue to the realization of a new paradigm, while pursuing the growth of the nation’s economy at the same time.”

The paradigm of Prime Minister Kan is now buried in the contaminated soils of the northeastern Tohoku region of Honshu, with the new guard standing watch, their backs to the past.

The lessons of March 11, 2011, will have to be learned for us by the next generation of Japanese. Let’s hope time is on their side.

January 26, 2013

How Kan-do attitude averted the meltdown of Japan

by Roger Pulvers

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/01/26/commentary/read-all-about-it-how-kan-do-attitude-averted-the-meltdown-of-japan/#.UQ4mmvL1tEt>

First Of Two Parts

Covering the catastrophic series of events that began with the magnitude 9, Great East Japan Earthquake and the tsunami it triggered on March 11, 2011, it is one of the most revealing and insightful books published in Japan in the past decade.

Seeing as it deals with the greatest crisis that this country has faced — and still faces every day — since the end of World War II in 1945, this is also a work that begs to be translated into many languages.

Published in paperback by Gentosha in October last year, “Tōden Fukushima Genpatsu Jiko Sōri Toshite Kangaeta Koto” (“My Thoughts as Prime Minister on the Tepco Fukushima Nuclear Plant Accident”), the book is a highly revealing document of those events as witnessed and written by the person at the very center of decision-making in Japan, the prime minister at the time, Naoto Kan.

The first word of the title — Tōden, the Japanese abbreviation of Tokyo Electric Power Co., or Tepco, the company that owns and operates the ill-fated plant — makes it clear that ex-Prime Minister Kan believes Tepco to be at the root of the accident and the concomitant damage it continues to cause as well.

As the true nature of the disaster unfolded in the weeks and months following the earthquake and tsunami, Kan came to see that no one would be safe in Japan until all of the country’s nuclear plants were shut down and decommissioned. How and why he came to this conclusion is the paramount theme of this book.

“It is not for politicians to judge the value of their work and actions as politicians,” he writes in the book’s foreword. “I have no course but to trust that judgment to history.”

He goes on to speak of the catastrophe that befell the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the U.S.S.R. (present-day Ukraine) in April 1986, having studied its aftermath in the accident reports. “But I hadn’t dreamt such a thing could occur in Japan,” he admits.

In fact, the greatest lesson — and one that, it seems, has not been thoroughly learned — is that no one had dreamt of the possibility of such an occurrence in this country. That was not part of the problem: That *was*, and still *is*, the problem.

Kan, a graduate of the applied physics department at Tokyo Institute of Technology, was, from the standpoint of prior scientific knowledge, the right person in the right place at that terrible time.

“When I heard that the plant had lost all electricity after the earthquake and tsunami, and that the ability to cool down the reactors had been lost, I felt my face freeze in shock. I knew that what followed was meltdowns.”

It wasn’t hard to make calculations on the scale of the potential disaster. Add to the six reactors and seven pools for spent fuel rods at the No. 1 plant the four reactors and four pools at the nearby No. 2 plant and you get a potentially lethal radiation spill of tens of times the amount emitted at Chernobyl.

“The Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency is responsible for dealing with nuclear accidents,” writes Kan, “and yet they could give me nothing in the way of explanation or an estimation of what might transpire. ... So I had no choice but to establish a system in the Prime Minister’s Official Residence at a very early stage to gather information.”

Then, in the early hours of March 15, Kan was told of Tepco’s intention to abandon the site of the accident. “The first week after the accident was a nightmare,” he writes.

“The consequences kept escalating. At 8 p.m. the first night, Reactor No. 1 experienced a meltdown. ... The next afternoon, a hydrogen explosion occurred there. Reactor No. 3 went into meltdown on the 13th, and on the 14th it too had a hydrogen explosion.

“I was at Tepco headquarters at 6 a.m. on the 15th when it was reported that a loud boom had been heard coming from Reactor No. 2; and at roughly the same time, Reactor No. 4 experienced a meltdown. ... I began to think that we might be facing the worst-case scenario.”

The worst-case scenario that haunted the prime minister was a domino effect of meltdowns inside reactors and fuel-rod pools as repair and maintenance became progressively too dangerous to undertake. The nightmare’s terrorizing eventuality was the evacuation of millions of people from the greater Tokyo zone and the relocation of the organs of government.

Tepco officials have subsequently denied that they were preparing to abandon the stricken plant, admitting only to planning a partial retreat from its most critically affected areas. With the powerful pro-nuclear lobby in business and government behind them, their spin on the story — including “meddling” by the prime minister which, they suggest, stymied necessary action — has gained some credence in the media.

This befuddling story is a key strategic element in the nuclear industry’s relentless campaign to blur responsibility and to re-legitimize nuclear-power generation in these seismically active islands.

Yet the record is unequivocal: Tepco found itself unable to control events as they took one turn after another for the worse; and had the prime minister not intervened to consolidate decision-making and expedite emergency measures, a pall of radiation may very well have descended over the entire Kanto region, where the capital is located.

Kan takes up the narrative: “It was at 3 a.m. when Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Banri Kaeda came to the Residence with the news that Masataka Shimizu, president of Tepco, had put in a request to withdraw from the nuclear plant site.

“If I (had let this happen), 50 million people would have to be evacuated within a few weeks. ... The very announcement to evacuate would result in mass panic.”

He goes into great detail regarding the simulation of the nightmare scenario, explaining that it was to prevent — at all costs — it becoming all too real that he took personal charge of the management of the disaster.

In Japanese it isn't the "buck" that goes around, stopping in front of the person who must take responsibility; it's the washtub (*tarai*). Kan grabbed it, contaminated water and all, as it was being passed around and around by Tepco officials. But as for those officials, it serves their purposes, both past, present and future, to perpetrate a notion that the prime minister was the one who continued to dirty the water. Even now, nearly two years after the fatal calamity, there is a conspiracy of silence among supporters of nuclear power in this country, with the present prime minister, Shinzo Abe, a staunch nuclear-power advocate, acting as Whisperer-in-Chief.

Kan's perspective is, however, both wide and on the money.

"This was an enemy created by the Japanese themselves, that a major nuclear accident will not occur," he writes.

"This was a premise established throughout Japanese society, a premise that allowed 54 reactors to be built. The law, the entire system of government, politics, economics, even the culture was acting under this set premise.

"Its conclusion was that we don't need to prepare for such a thing. It was this attitude that led to a situation in which no one was able to deal with an accident that could occur."

The aftermath of Tepco's accident is still very much with us, and will continue to be until the entire truth of what happened in Fukushima in 2011 is recognized by the people in power in Japan today. It is this aftermath that will be the topic of next week's Counterpoint.

Michale Boganim's shattering new film

February 8, 2013

How to cope when home is where the radiation is?

by Kaori Shoji

Special To The Japan Times

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2013/02/08/films/how-to-cope-when-home-is-where-the-radiation-is/#.URVw5fL1tEs>

When she hears the phrase "a sense of home," filmmaker Michale Boganim always endures a wave of sadness. "Home can mean a whole lot of things, but to me it has connotations of displacement and loss," she tells The Japan Times. "I come from a family that was always moving around, and even as we were moving, I'd be wondering what a real home was, and about laying down roots. It's a theme I'll always be exploring."

Just as Boganim's last film, the 2004 documentary "Odessa ... Odessa!," had been about Jewish communities and their values becoming obsolete, her latest, "Land of Oblivion," is about an entire region shutting down, gathering dust and sinking into decay. It's also a memorial testament to life in Pripyat, drenched in golden sunshine with a lush forest spreading right into the horizon and people going about their normal existences, before the disaster at Chernobyl changed that picture forever and the word "meltdown" became part of the global vocabulary.

When Boganim started the project, 3/11 had not yet happened, and she was aware that "most people in the world didn't even know where Chernobyl is located on the map." But her mother was from Ukraine, and Boganim was familiar with Pripyat, host town to the nuclear plant. "I wanted to show what Pripyat is like (now), which is a real ghost town. Otherwise no one will know what happened, or even care."

According to Boganim, countries formerly under the Soviet flag had a "let's forget" mentality. "Ukraine is especially like that," she says. "The whole country is in denial about Chernobyl, mainly because they don't want to deal with what happened during Soviet times. It's still a fresh country that wants to look forward, not back into a dark past. And they want to believe they're not responsible for Chernobyl. I can understand all that so well.

"You know, a long time ago a film critic asked me why the Ukrainians never made a film about the tragedy and I was like, 'Well, it's never that simple, especially because it happened in the Soviet Era.' People who say things like that have never had to deal with the stigma of history, or seen an entire region cut off from existence. They just have no idea."

This is precisely why Boganim was impressed by the way the Japanese handled their own nuclear tragedy: "Just like Chernobyl, Fukushima has become a global household word. But the Japanese already have that cycle of disaster and recovery, because they have Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I got the feeling that as a nation, Japan wants to pull through this thing together.

"Of course, there were a lot of coverups and withholding information. I can see that there is a lot of anxiety. But at least it's not like Chernobyl, where the people were told nothing — zero! — and for years and years they lived in constant fear and worry."

Much of Boganim's own childhood was spent moving from one city to another. "I longed for a sense of permanence, and belonging. But when the nuclear disaster happened in Chernobyl, I understood that my own personal loneliness was absolutely nothing compared to what the residents in there were going through.

"The same thing of course, happened in Fukushima. I was in the process of editing the film during 3/11 and it was strange and very, very terrible to see the exact same things happening all over again. It was a

triple-fold experience — the TV footage I remembered seeing when Chernobyl happened, this film and then Fukushima.”

For the people of Ukraine, explains Boganim, Chernobyl symbolized the fate of the Soviet Union. “First the disaster, and then the collapse of the USSR. I know many Ukrainians feel that they paid for their independence with that disaster. I’d be very curious to know how people in Fukushima feel. Was there a payoff?”

Still, Boganim knows that nothing can compensate for having to leave home, and for having your homeland contaminated forever. “In the film, I identify with Anya,” she says. “She’s stuck in the pre-Chernobyl days, when she was happy in her own little world and had a strong sense of home and belonging. She can’t leave now, because somehow she believes there’s a chance she’ll have that again.

“I wanted to draw on that emotion, just as much as I wanted to draw on the destructive powers of a nuclear disaster. Its poison is invisible. And it will destroy everything for generations to come.”

Kei Shimada on the experiences of nuclear communities

February 13, 2013

Filmmaker focuses on lives near nuke sites

by Keiji Hirano

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/02/13/national/filmmaker-focuses-on-lives-near-nuke-sites/#.URpsaPL1tEs>

A documentary that recently began screening chronicles the experiences of Japanese communities hosting nuclear facilities and the high price paid by some of them because of the March 2011 Fukushima meltdown disaster, including farmers and fishermen unable to market their produce because of radioactive contamination.

“I hope I can show that we can’t coexist with nuclear power and it is the duty of each of us to make a choice about energy in the future,” said Kei Shimada, director of “Fukushima, Rokkasho and Message to the Future.” Its first screening took place Saturday in Tokyo.

Shimada, originally a Tokyo-based freelance photographer, started covering nuclear issues in the wake of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine and eventually settled in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, the site of a nuclear fuel cycle complex.

“I wanted to follow the development of the nuclear fuel cycle project on the spot and be close to those living there,” Shimada, 53, said.

Her 12 years living in the village through 2002 resulted in two photo books, one of which won a journalistic award. She was about to start shooting her first movie about Rokkasho when the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011, led to Japan’s own nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co.

The enormity of the calamity prompted her to change her original plans and turn her attention to those living in Fukushima in addition to residents of Rokkasho.

One of the people in the documentary is Kazuo Nakamura, a 14th-generation farmer in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, who has had to keep his harvested rice in a storehouse as consumers nationwide shun Fukushima rice after radioactive materials turned up in samples.

Joining an antinuclear demonstration in Tokyo as well as drawing attention to his plight at civic meetings, Nakamura said he is determined to maintain his way of life despite the hardships.

“I will continue farming even if I have to abandon my crops,” he said. “And now I believe it is our duty” to get rid of nuclear facilities, he added, because they “will definitely cause harmful effects to our descendents.”

In Rokkasho, Eisaku Takiguchi continues to catch Pacific cod with his son despite cesium contamination in order to document the catches he could have made. Their silent chagrin is evident as they are shown throwing the fish back into the ocean from their vessel.

Takiguchi, as a young fisherman, led a protest movement against the construction of the nuclear fuel cycle facilities. Decades later, he now says: “I’m still proud of our campaign. I can walk the street with my head held high.”

Shimada became acquainted with him while living in Rokkasho. “I have been impressed with him as someone who stood up against a big power.”

Takiguchi's son, Kenji, meanwhile, indicates concerns over his future as a fisherman in the village. "I've never done anything (other than fish). I would quit this job if I could do something else."

Shimada included in her film Rokkasho residents who argue that the nuclear facilities have brought jobs and relative prosperity to the village, with a woman involved in the construction business saying: "We are happy here. I wonder what will happen to us if these facilities are terminated."

"It is true that not a few people in Rokkasho think like that," Shimada said. "But I think it means the village has depended on the money brought in exchange for hosting the nuclear fuel cycle facilities."

"The nuclear industry has attempted to win the residents over to its side with money so it can build these unwanted facilities in this remote, small village," she said.

Yukie Tanabe is another victim of the Fukushima disaster who appears in the documentary. She had to evacuate from her home, only 5 km from the crippled Tepco complex, to Tokyo with her husband and their son. As an evacuee, she gave birth to her second son and named him Fuku after her family's home prefecture of Fukushima. The kanji for "fuku" means fortune or blessing.

Despite various hardships imposed on the public, moves to resuscitate the nuclear industry have begun emerging since the Liberal Democratic Party-led government was installed in December.

Tatsuya Murakami, the staunch antinuclear mayor of Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, says in the movie: "People in Japan consumed massive amounts of energy, but they have changed since the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The government, the nuclear industry, as well as business leaders, should be aware of it."

The village promoted itself as a "pioneer" in Japan's nuclear development after the nation's first research reactor achieved criticality there in 1957.

Shimada, who describes herself as a "nonprofessional in filmmaking," said she was supported by many people, including graduates from a film school, during the course of making the documentary.

A group was formed to support her project and it collected around ¥3.5 million to finance the film.

"I received more donations than expected, apparently because this project started shortly after the nuclear crisis in Fukushima," she said. "And I'm impressed that many donors attached messages expressing their expectations that this film will show the reality communities hosting nuclear facilities."

US Symposium on medical effects of Fukushima disaster

Medical and Ecological Consequences of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/radiation-health-whats-new/2013/1/30/beyond-nuclear-featured-at-medical-and-ecological-consequenc.html>

FUKUSHIMA TWO YEARS LATER:

Global symposium to address mounting medical & ecological consequences

March 11-12 – New York Academy of Medicine

[New York – January 24, 2013] Two years after the March 11, 2011 triple meltdown at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex, new research and new information continues to come to light about its continuing bio-medical and ecological consequences, how they compare with Chernobyl, and what they indicate about the impact of nuclear power on public health, safety, and the environment. A unique public symposium, **"The Medical and Ecological Consequences of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident,"** will be held on **March 11-12** at the **New York Academy of Medicine** to explore the latest data and its implications. A project of **The Helen Caldicott Foundation**, the symposium is being co-sponsored by **Physicians for Social Responsibility**.

The Japanese Prime Minister during the Fukushima crisis, **Naoto Kan**, will open the symposium with a special videotaped message. He will be followed by another video message from **Hiroaki Koide**, Master of Nuclear Engineering, Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute (KURRI), Specialist of Radiation Safety and Control.

Then an international group of some of the world's leading experts – including several from Japan and the U.S. - in radiation biology, embryology, epidemiology, oceanography, nuclear engineering, and nuclear policy will make presentations and participate in panel discussions. Among them are **Dr.**

Ken Buesseler of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute; **Dr. Hisaku Sakiyama**, a member of the Japanese Diet's Fukushima Accident Independent Investigative Commission; **Dr. Alexey Yablokov** of the Russian Academy of Sciences; and many others (see below for a list of presenters).

Much of the information and analysis that the participants will present is new. All of it is highly relevant to the current debate about the future of nuclear power in Japan, the U.S. and globally.

"The Fukushima crisis is actually an issue of global public health," said **Dr. Helen Caldicott**, the symposium's organizer. "As a physician, I've been distressed about the lack of general understanding of the medical science that should be part of any discussion of nuclear power, but isn't. For example, cancers in humans take from five to seventy years to develop after radiation exposure, so it takes time to actually see the effects in populations," she said. "But we are already observing a demonstrable increased incidence of thyroid abnormalities in children in the Fukushima Prefecture. This may be an early indicator of an eventual increased incidence of thyroid cancers. Further, plumes of radioactivity from Fukushima are currently migrating in the Pacific Ocean towards the West Coast of the U.S."

"This crisis is far from over. Large radioactive releases into the ocean continue, and thousands of tons of radioactive waste are set to be incinerated in cities throughout Japan. And worst of all, Fukushima Daiichi's building #4, which holds 100 tons of highly radioactive spent fuel, was seriously damaged during

the earthquake and could collapse in another large quake. This would cause the fuel pool to burn, releasing even more massive amounts of radiation. All of these have profound medical and public health implications.”

Confirmed speakers at the symposium include:

- **Dr. Herbert Abrams**, Emeritus Professor Radiology, Stanford University, Member of Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation Committee, National Academy of Sciences (BEIR VII), presenting on "The Hazards of Low-level Ionizing Radiation: Controversy and Evidence."
- **Robert Alvarez**, former U.S. Department of Energy Senior Policy Advisor, now Senior Scholar, Institute for Policy Studies, presenting on "Management of Spent Fuel Pools and Radioactive Waste"
- **Dr. David Brenner**, Higgins Professor of Radiation Physics, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, presenting on "Mechanistic Models for Effects of Ionizing Radiation on Living Systems"
- **Dr. Ken Buesseler**, Marine Scientist, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, presenting on "Radionuclides in Ocean, Fish and the Seafloor"
- **Dr. Ian Fairlie**, independent consultant on radiation risks, former Secretary to UK Government's Committee Examining the Radiation Risks of Internal Emitter, presenting on "The Nuclear Disaster at Fukushima: Nuclide Source Terms and Initial Health Effects"
- **Cindy Folkers**, Beyond Nuclear, presenting on "Post-Fukushima Food Monitoring in the USA"
- **David Freeman**, engineer and attorney, former Chairman, Tennessee Valley Authority and Science Advisor to former President Jimmy Carter, presenting on "My Experience with Nuclear Power"
- **Arnie Gundersen**, Nuclear Engineer, Fairewinds Associates, which consults on U.S. nuclear safety, presenting on "What Did They Know and When Did They Know It?"
- **Kevin Kamps**, Beyond Nuclear, Specialist in High Level Waste Management and Transportation, presenting on "Seventy Years of Radioactive Risks in Japan and America"
- **David Lochbaum**, Union of Concerned Scientists, presenting on "Another Unsurprising Surprise"
- **Dr. Donald Louria**, Chairman Emeritus of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the University of Medicine and Dentistry, New Jersey, will chair the symposium.
- **Joe Mangano**, Executive Director, Radiation and Public Health Project, presenting on "Post-Fukushima Increases in Newborn Hypothyroidism on the West Coast of USA"
- **Akio Matsumura**, Founder of Global Forum for Parliamentary Leaders on Global Survival, presenting on "What did the World Learn from the Fukushima Accident?"
- **Dr. Tim Mousseau**, Professor of Biological Sciences, University of South Carolina, presenting on "Chernobyl, Fukushima and other Hot Places: Biological Consequences"
- **Dr. Marek Niedziela**, Professor of Pediatrics, Poznan University of Medical Sciences, Poland, presenting on "Thyroid Pathology in Children with Particular Reference to Chernobyl and Fukushima"
- **Mary Olson**, Nuclear Information Resource Service, presenting on "Gender Matters in the Nuclear Age"
- **Dr. Hisako Sakiyama**, Doctor of Medicine, former Senior Researcher at National Institute Radiological Sciences, Japan, member of Fukushima Accident Independent Investigative Commission, presenting on "Risk Assessment of Low Dose Radiation in Japan: What Became Clear to the National Diet of Japan's Fukushima Investigation Commission"
- **Steven Starr**, Senior Scientist, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Clinical Laboratory Science Program Director, University of Missouri, presenting on "The Implications of the Massive Contamination of Japan with Radioactive Cesium"

- **Dr. Wladimir Wertelecki**, former Chairman Department of Medical Genetics and Birth Defects Department at the University of South Alabama, presenting on “Congenital Malformations in Rivne, Polossia associated with the Chernobyl Accident”
- **Dr. Steve Wing**, Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Gillings School of Global Public Health, University of North Carolina, presenting on “Epidemiological Studies of Radiation Releases from Nuclear Facilities: Lessons from Past and Present”
- **Dr. Alexey Yablokov**, Russian Academy of Sciences, presenting on “Lessons from Chernobyl”

“The Medical and Ecological Consequences of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident” symposium will be held March 11 – 12 at the New York Academy of Medicine, located at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 103rd Street, beginning at 9am on March 11. The symposium program is posted at www.helencaldicottfoundation.org. Members of the public can obtain information and register for the event online at <http://www.helencaldicottfoundation.org/symposium.html>

NOTE TO JOURNALISTS AND BLOGGERS: *Members of the media are invited to attend all or part of the symposium free of charge. Please see the symposium agenda* (<http://www.helencaldicottfoundation.org/symposium.html>, **bottom of the page**) *for dates and times of specific presentations and panels. Dr. Caldicott and other symposium presenters are available for advance or side interviews on request. To arrange an interview, contact Josh Baran, jcbaran@gmail.com, 917-797-1799 or Stephen Kent, skent@kentcom.com, 914-589-5988 (members of the working media only please).*

The first session of the symposium on Monday morning is highly recommended. For media, when you RSVP, please state in your email if you will be attending the entire symposium, individual days or individual sessions. Thanks.

About The Helen Caldicott Foundation

The goal of The Helen Caldicott Foundation is far-reaching public education about the often underestimated and poorly understood medical hazards of nuclear weapons and nuclear power.

About Physicians for Social Responsibility

PSR is the largest physician-led organization in the U.S. working to prevent nuclear war and proliferation and to slow, stop and reverse global warming and toxic degradation of the environment.

Media Contacts: Josh Baran, jcbaran@gmail.com - 917-797-1799 and Stephen Kent, skent@kentcom.com - 914-589-5988

Fuskushima LDP chapters opposed to restart

February 16, 2013

Fukushima official angrily bolts meeting when restart of nuke plants mentioned

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201302160056>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A Fukushima prefectural assembly chairman stormed out of a Liberal Democratic Party meeting on Feb. 15 after the discussion turned toward the possible restart of idle nuclear reactors in Japan.

"I am walking out if the government plans to restart (nuclear power plants) without acting responsibly in dealing with the (Fukushima) accident," said Kenji Saito at an LDP Research Commission on Oil, Resources and Energy meeting in Tokyo to exchange views on energy policy. "I cannot possibly join such a discussion."

The meeting was attended by assembly chairs from 13 prefectures that host nuclear power plants.

After the chairman of the Shizuoka prefectural assembly asked the commission how the government will cope with the idle Hamaoka nuclear power plant, his Hokkaido counterpart told the commission, "I want you to promptly decide on procedures for the restart and let us know (the results)."

Yoshiaki Harada, commission member and former bureaucrat with the predecessor of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry responded: "Sticking to the policy of never restarting any of the reactors would mislead the nation's future."

That comment prompted Saito to walk out of the meeting.

"All the Fukushima chapter members (of the LDP) are opposed to any restarts," he angrily told reporters afterward. "I cannot stand to be part of such a meeting."

Unswayed, the meeting continued on without him.

"We want to eventually restart some of the reactors," said Hiroyuki Hosoda, the LDP's executive acting secretary-general. "I understand the Fukushima representative cannot respond to the issue in a constructive manner."

Against Ohma plant

February 19, 2013

Local communities oppose Ohma plant construction

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20130219_28.html

Municipalities on the northernmost island of Hokkaido have asked the Japanese government to halt indefinitely the construction of a nuclear plant in neighboring Aomori Prefecture.

The heads of Hakodate and 5 other cities submitted the request to State Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Kazuyoshi Akaba, on Tuesday.

Electric Power Development Company, or J-Power, is building the nuclear facility in Ohma Town in Aomori. Hakodate is located only 23 kilometers from the plant across the Tsugaru Strait on the main island of Honshu.

Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo said there's no need to push the plant construction forward, given the policy agreement between the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition New Komeito Party.

The agreement calls for reductions in the country's dependence on nuclear power as much as possible.

The mayor also said concerns are growing among Hakodate residents over the safety of the Ohma plant because of its location just across the strait.

The city is considering filing a lawsuit demanding the plant construction be stopped.

Sketches of Chernobyl people in Tokyo

February 20, 2013

Sketches depicting Chernobyl aftermath on display in Tokyo



Hiroshi Kaihara

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130219p2a00m0na011000c.html>

An exhibition of sketches by a late Japanese artist who strived to depict people affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster is under way in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward.

The exhibition, featuring sketches by Japanese artist Hiroshi Kaihara, who died in 2005 at the age of 57, was arranged by former members of the Shinjuku ward liaison council for after-school daycare. Organizers hope the exhibition will encourage people to think about the problems relating to nuclear power in the wake of the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant.



A work by Hiroshi Kaihara depicting people of Belarus. (Image courtesy of Kaihara Hiroshi no Shigoto no Kai)

After the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986, Kaihara repeatedly visited Belarus and Ukraine and depicted the lives of farmers in watercolors and ink, paying attention to the suffering they had endured through radioactive pollution of their land. His works have been compiled into an anthology.

The exhibition, now under way at Eco Gallery Shinjuku in Shinjuku Ward, is titled "Fukushima o Omou Kazashimo no Mura" (Reflecting on Fukushima: Leeward villages). It features about 20 works by Kaihara. Also on display are photographs by photojournalist Takashi Morizumi showing areas affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, including the Fukushima Prefecture village of Iitate.

Entry to the exhibition, which runs through Feb. 20, is free.

Related links:

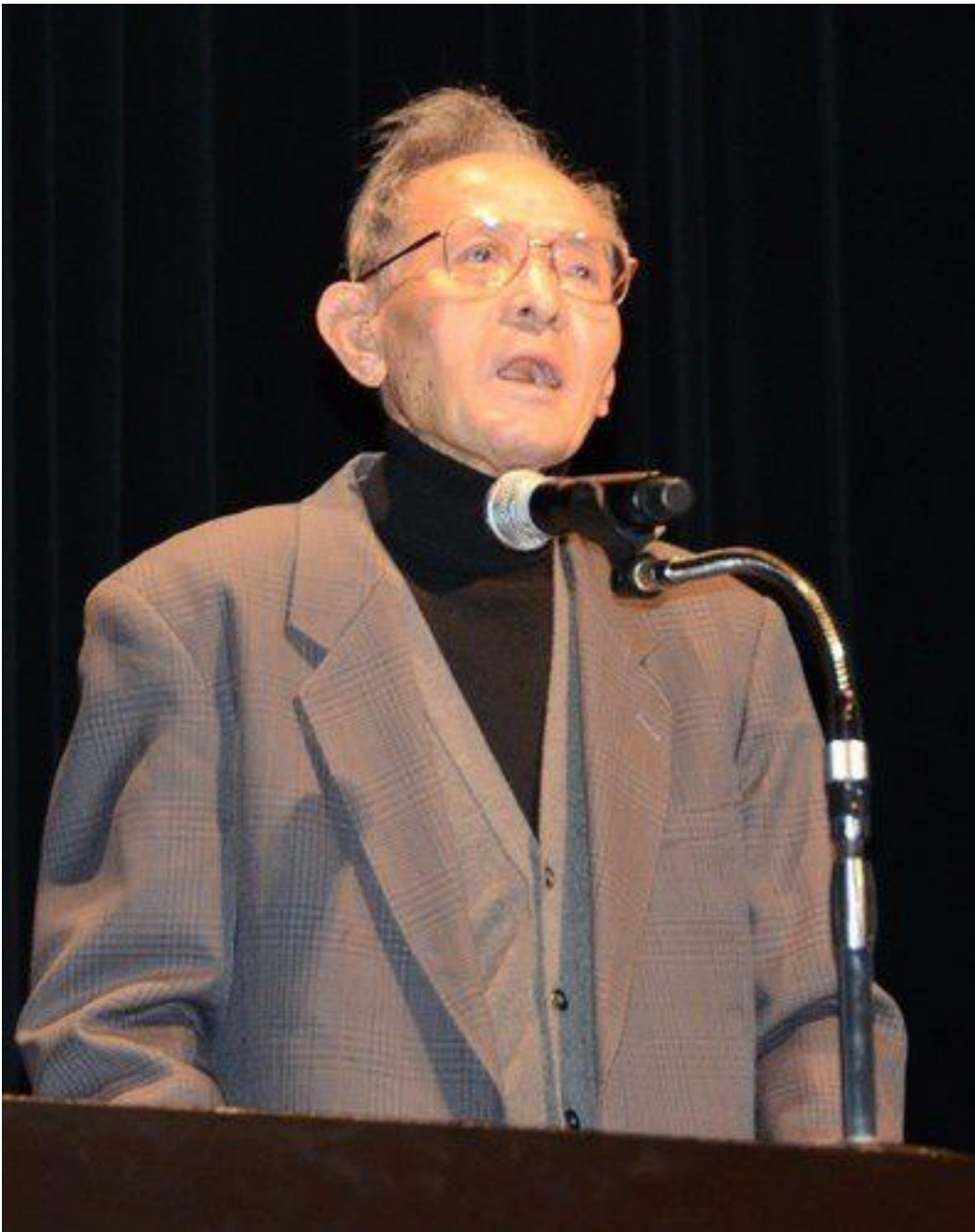
Kazashimo no Mura: <http://kazashimo.org/>

Eco Gallery Shinjuku: <http://www.shinjuku-ecocenter.jp/facilities/access.html>

Matashichi Oishi, contaminated 60 years ago

March 2, 2013

Former crew member of ship exposed to radiation speaks against nukes



Matashichi Oishi speaks at an anti-nuke gathering in Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, on March 1. (Mainichi)
<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130302p2a00m0na007000c.html>

YAIZU, Shizuoka -- A former crew member of a ship exposed to radiation by a nuclear test spoke out against nuclear energy at a gathering here on March 1, adding his criticism of the government.

Matashichi Oishi, 79, was a crew member on the fishing ship "Dai-go (No. 5) Fukuryu Maru," which was affected by radiation from a United States hydrogen bomb test at the Bikini Atoll 60 years ago. The March 1 gathering was held to remember the events of that day.

Oishi spoke with some lingering effects from a cerebral hemorrhage that occurred in April last year. In his speech, he mentioned the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, and said, "We must be vigilant. As a person exposed to radiation, I want to pass on how frightening nuclear energy is."

"The government made the nuclear plants, and after the nuclear disaster repeatedly said there was nothing to worry about. We ourselves must study more," he added

Only 2 anti-nukes left on revised energy panel

March 3, 2013

Streamlined energy panel has fewer anti-nuke advocates

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303020038>

By MARI FUJISAKI/ Staff Writer

Only two anti-nuclear advocates remain on the pared-down panel of experts tasked with compiling Japan's new basic energy policy, making a dramatic shift away from nuclear power unlikely.

The number of panel members has been reduced from 25 to 15, with several anti-nuclear advocates being passed over for reappointment. The panel was set up when the Democratic Party of Japan was in power, and one-third of panel members were opposed to nuclear energy.

The new lineup of members was announced by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry on March 1. The panel is expected to make its recommendations for a new basic energy policy by the end of the year. Akio Mimura, an adviser to Nippon Steel and Sumitomo Metal Corp., will continue to serve as chairman of the panel.

Although 10 members from the last panel were reappointed, a number of anti-nuclear advocates were sidelined, including Tetsunari Iida, executive director of the nonprofit Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies, and Junko Edahiro, an environmental journalist.

The only nuclear energy opponents left on the panel are Kazuhiro Ueta, an economics professor at Kyoto University, and Kikuko Tatsumi, a consumer affairs adviser.

New members to the panel include Issei Nishikawa, governor of Fukui Prefecture, which has 13 nuclear reactors in its jurisdiction, the largest number in Japan, and Toshiyuki Shiga, chief operating officer of Nissan Motor Co.

When the DPJ was still in power, eight of the 25 panel members were opposed to continued dependence on nuclear energy. However, discussions have not been held since November because Mimura said the DPJ government's stance of decommissioning all nuclear reactors by the 2030s was too vague.

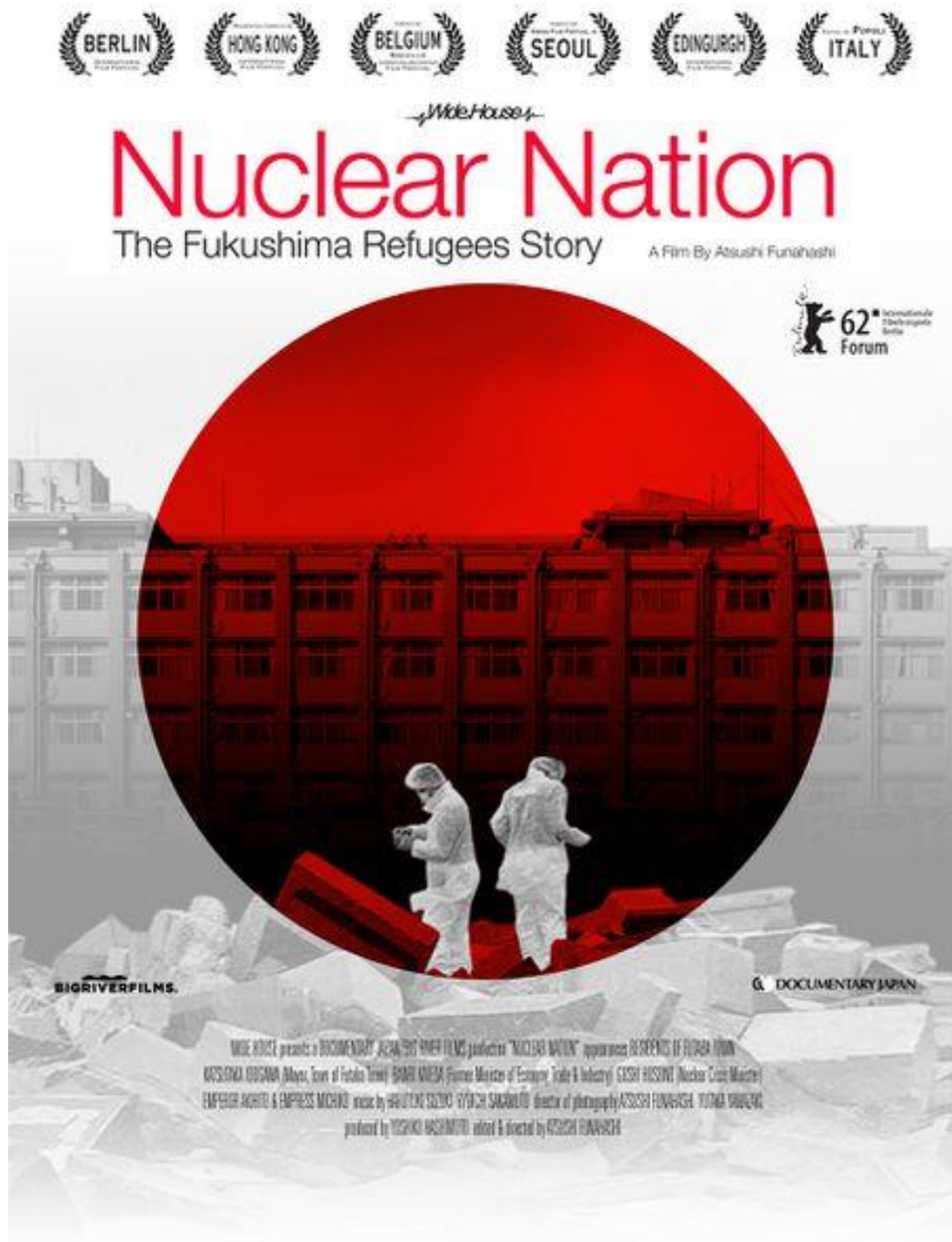
At a March 1 news conference, Toshimitsu Motegi, the industry minister, said: "We are not hoping for a clear demarcation into two camps during discussions on individual issues. We are hoping that a comprehensive policy direction can be reached centered on specialization in each field."

He also added that no conclusion had been reached on whether a long-term ratio of dependence on nuclear energy would be included in the new basic energy policy.

A new film on Fukushima

March 4, 2013

<http://nuclearnation.jp/en/>



Different ways of looking at the same reality

March 7, 2013

Weekly anti-nuclear protests losing steam after change in government

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303070069>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Interest is fading in the weekly anti-nuclear protests near the prime minister's office that once attracted thousands of people and pressed the government to adopt a policy of phasing out nuclear power in Japan. On March 1, only 200 to 300 people joined the protest outside the Diet building in central Tokyo.

Despite the decreasing number of protesters, illustrator Misao Redwolf, one of the main organizers of the rallies held every Friday, said they must continue delivering their message to the government, which is now led by the pro-nuclear Liberal Democratic Party.

"We'd like to remind people at the center of government that there is something we should never forget," Redwolf said. "However, it is true that it is becoming difficult for everyone to continue to be interested in the nuclear issue two years after the accident. I am most worried about public interest fading away over time."

The protests started about a year after the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant on March 11, 2011.

The protest size peaked in the summer last year, when reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture were restarted. Several tens of thousands of people, including parents with children, homemakers, students, senior citizens and employees on their way back from work, crowded the area around the government buildings.

"No restarts," they shouted. "Don't bring nuclear power plants back online."

Public opposition toward nuclear power prompted the previous administration of the Democratic Party of Japan to adopt an energy policy to halt operations of nuclear power plants by the 2030s.

According to the DPJ government's "deliberative poll" conducted last summer, nearly half of the respondents supported a nuclear phaseout by 2030. The government also received opinions by fax and other means, in which almost 90 percent backed a no-nuclear policy.

The DPJ administration initially assumed that nuclear power would still account for 15 percent of Japan's electricity supply in 2030.

However, the LDP trounced the DPJ in the Lower House election on Dec. 16.

The administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has promised to bring back the policy to promote nuclear energy that the LDP pursued before it was ousted from power four years ago.

"We will have nuclear power reactors restarted when they are confirmed to be safe," Abe told an Upper House plenary session on March 6. "We will review from scratch the previous administration's policy to enable halting the operations of all nuclear power plants by the 2030s."

March 6, 2013

Source : The Japan Times

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/06/national/weekly-rallies-keeping-antinuclear-movement-alive-after-ldps-return/#.UTcEwVex2Sp>

Weekly rallies keeping antinuclear movement alive after LDP's return

by Morichika Nakamoto

Kyodo

The weekly antinuclear power rallies are still being staged outside the prime minister's office, as evidenced by a gathering of some 3,000 people one recent cold February evening, but the crowds are getting smaller.

Part of this decline may be because two years have passed since the Fukushima nuclear disaster started. Another factor may be that the Liberal Democratic Party — the very promoter of nuclear energy over the past half-century — returned to power at the end of last year.

The demonstrations, organized by the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a body made up of 13 groups as well as individual members, have been held every Friday in Nagata-cho since late last March, when the Democratic Party of Japan was in power and seemed receptive to calls to end nuclear power.

The movement that originally attracted 300 people grew drastically to draw some 200,000 participants of all ages within three months as the DPJ-led government moved toward restarting two reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, coalition members said.

The reactors were eventually restarted in July and are currently the only ones running among 50 commercial reactors whose operations were suspended amid safety concerns in light of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant meltdowns.

Although the protests failed to prevent the restart of the Oi reactors, Takako Tohara, a coalition member in charge of public relations, said she felt the movement was being heard when group members managed to hold direct talks in August with then-DPJ Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.

"It made us realize the impact of our action," Tohara said. "Mr. Noda's mentioning phasing out nuclear reactors by the 2030s was a testament."

In September, Noda's government worked out a new energy strategy that included phasing out nuclear power by the 2030s. But the LDP, which trounced the DPJ in December's Lower House election and returned to rule after three years in opposition, plans to rethink the energy plan.

LDP Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in his policy speech to the Diet in late February that idled reactors will be restarted once their safety has been confirmed in order to ensure stable electricity supply and reduce energy costs. His remarks came despite public safety concerns, but amid calls from industries threatening to relocate if they cannot have access to cheap electricity, such as that from reactors.

Misao Redwolf, spokesman for the antinuclear coalition, said the current voting system for national elections fails to reflect public sentiment, as less than a quarter of the entire voting population cast ballots for the LDP in December's general election but that still gave the party a majority in the Lower House.

In terms of the number of votes in the single-seat constituencies, the LDP garnered less than it did during the previous general election in 2009, when it lost to the DPJ.

"Ballots were cast to oust the DPJ rather than in support of the LDP, so it does not mean the number of antinuclear citizens dropped," Redwolf said.

At an iconic site of the antinuclear movement, about a 10-minute walk from the prime minister's office, Miyoko Watanabe, who had to evacuate from her home due to the nuclear disaster, spoke in front of a camera about the time Fukushima No. 1 started operating in the early 1970s.

"Everyone was happy with the good income source in the poor rural area, saying it is clean energy and there was no need to fear radiation. No one could raise their voice then," Watanabe, 73, who still lives in Fukushima Prefecture, said at "Tent Square," a makeshift gathering place set up by activists just outside

the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry on Sept. 11, 2011, exactly six months after the megadisaster triggered the nuclear crisis.

Last September, activists there began airing live programs every Friday afternoon on the online Ustream channel, sending out messages including the voices of people from Fukushima Prefecture, where more than 150,000 residents still cannot return home.

During one such session, Yasunari Fujimoto of the Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs noted that **nuclear power proponents who fomented concerns over winter and summer electricity supply shortages last year amid the suspension of most reactors are now warning that the lack of nuclear power will cause rises in electricity prices.**

"It costs more to promote nuclear power than to develop renewable energy. We have to keep people informed of these facts," he said.

When the tent city was launched, about 1,000 people, many in their 20s and 30s, gathered daily from around the country to express their objections to METI's efforts to restart nuclear plants without thorough investigations into why Fukushima No. 1 occurred. Some waged 10-day hunger strikes.

"The movement served as a catalyst for young people to take action back home," said Takehiko Yagi, a spokesman for Tent Square.

Some of the original participants staged sit-ins at the Oi plant last July to try to prevent the reactor restarts. Others continue to confront other issues, including the disposal of radiation-contaminated debris that is being carried out in various parts of Japan.

Antinukes rally in Tokyo

March 11, 2013

Two years after disaster, anti-nuke rallies in Tokyo still draw huge crowds

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201303110022

March 11, 2013

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN AND WIRE REPORTS

Galvanized on the eve of the second anniversary of an earthquake and tsunami that triggered the world's worst nuclear disaster in 25 years, protesters turned out in full force in the Japanese capital on March 9 and 10, calling on the government to shun nuclear power.

On March 10, an estimated 40,000 protesters demonstrated around Tokyo, including in front of the Prime Minister's Official Residence, ministry offices and Hibiya Park.

"It's becoming more and more important for us to protest. I do this for my children, we can't leave the mess of nuclear power behind to them," said a 32-year-old mother of two marching in front of the offices of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, chanting "Stop nuclear! Protect our children!"

"People and the media are starting to forget Fukushima and what happened there," said the woman.

Japan is still coming to terms with the disaster that ravaged its northeastern region on March 11, 2011--the earthquake and tsunami killed more than 15,000 people. Several thousand people are still unaccounted for. The disaster triggered a meltdown at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1

nuclear power plant, which forced 160,000 people from their homes, and many of them will never return. It also sparked an unprecedented protest movement against nuclear power.

Protesters throng Tokyo parks on national holidays and outside the Diet building every Friday evening, drawing people previously unseen at political rallies, such as salarymen and housewives.

TEPCO faces a decades-long effort to decontaminate and decommission the wrecked nuclear plant after the worst atomic disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

All of Japan's 50 reactors were gradually shut down after the Fukushima disaster and all but two of them remain idle.

But the sweeping December victory of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Liberal Democratic Party, which long supported nuclear power and fostered ties between politicians, bureaucrats and utilities, is a concern for nuclear power's opponents.

A recent survey showed about 70 percent of Japanese want to phase out nuclear power eventually. An equal number support Abe, who wants to restart off-line reactors if they meet new safety standards.

On March 10, Nobuko Kameyama, a 67-year-old retiree, handing out anti-nuclear leaflets at a train station in Tokyo, said many people were preoccupied with a stagnant economy while progress made toward phasing out nuclear under the previous government was lost when it lost power.

"The movement seems to have gotten quieter because we had to go back to the drawing board when the LDP got voted back in," Kameyama said.

In a Tokyo park on March 9, hundreds of people rallied, vowing never to give up the fight against nuclear power.

"I am going to fight against those who act as though Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima never happened," Nobel Prize-winning writer Kenzaburo Oe told the crowd, referring to the atomic bombings preceding the end of World War II. "I am going to fight to prevent any more reactors from being restarted."

The demonstrators applauded, waving signs and lanterns that said, "Let's save the children," and "No nukes." Some were handing out leaflets, pleading to save animals abandoned in the no-entry zone around the plant.

Kazuko Nihei, 36, selling trinkets and soap that mothers, like her, who had fled Fukushima, had made, hoping to raise funds for children's health checkups and their new lives in Tokyo.

"When the government talks about recovery, they are talking about infrastructure. When we talk about recovery, we are talking about the future of our children," she said.

(The Associated Press and Reuters contributed to this report.)

Protestors out against nukes all over the world

Anti-nuke protests fill streets around world before 3/11 anniversary

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303100051>

March 10, 2013

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

On the eve of the second anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, protesters were out in full force around the world, driven by the greater awareness of the potential dangers of nuclear energy.

Several protests were held in various parts of Taiwan on March 9, with about 100,000 demonstrators gathering for one in Taipei organized by a citizens' group.

The increased public concern has led to a push for a referendum on whether nuclear plants should be constructed.

Although construction on the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant began in 1999 in New Taipei, completion has been delayed because of a temporary suspension of construction due to a political clash between the ruling and opposition parties. That delay has led to concerns about the safety of the plant.

In late February, the administration of President Ma Ying-jeou decided to propose a referendum that would ask voters if they supported cancellation of the construction of the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant. Ma's Kuomintang supports construction of the plant.

For the referendum to pass, a majority of the 18 million voters in Taiwan have to go to the polls and a majority of those have to support its passage. Because the chances for passage are low, Kuomintang officials are hoping that this outcome will not force construction to be halted.

However, the proposal has invigorated the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, which opposes nuclear energy, and other groups opposed to nuclear power. Even a number of celebrities have come out against nuclear power, including actress Lin Chi-ling, who is popular in Japan for her appearances in TV dramas.

More than T\$280 billion (about 900 billion yen, or \$9.4 billion) has already been invested in the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant.

Defending the need for nuclear energy, Prime Minister Jiang Yi-huah said, "If the nuclear plant is stopped, electricity rates will increase."

However, criticism continues to be aimed at state-run Taiwan Power Co. for its failure to make greater management efforts.

The referendum is expected to be held sometime later this year.

In the March 9 protests, there were moderate voices among participants.

"While I do not oppose nuclear energy, I am worried about the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant," said Cheng Hsin-i, a third-year student at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei.

However, because there are public opinion polls with more than 60 percent of respondents opposed to the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant, the referendum could overturn the plans of the Kuomintang.

Meanwhile, gatherings in South Korea went beyond concerns over nuclear energy.

In Seoul on March 9, a gathering not only remembered the victims of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, but also called for denuclearization of Asia and the world due to concerns about the growing tensions on the Korean Peninsula with a nuclear-capable North Korea. A number of South Koreans who lived through the atomic bombing of Japan, also participated.

Several thousands took part in a gathering organized by environmental protection groups. Among the participants were hibakusha who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 as well as their descendants. They called for a world without nuclear weapons and nuclear energy plants.

An 86-year-old woman who now lives in Hapcheon in Gyeongsangnam-do province was in Hiroshima when the atomic bomb was dropped on Aug. 6, 1945. Soon thereafter her mother died. After Japan's defeat in World War II, she and her family moved to South Korea, but over the next decade or so, her husband and other relatives died due to radiation after-effects from the atomic bombing.

"There are many people now who do not know the danger of nuclear bombs," she said.

Anti-nuclear protests have been frequent in Germany since the Chernobyl accident in 1986, but this year a training exercise was also held based on the scenario that an accident had occurred at a nuclear plant. Such training exercises are rare in Germany, even with its long history of anti-nuclear protests. The exercise was organized on March 9 by anti-nuclear groups in Germany at the Grohnde Nuclear Power Plant in Lower Saxony. Protesters called for immediate suspension of operations at the plant. "Don't think that a major disaster is occurring 9,000 kilometers away, but imagine that it is happening in front of your home," organizers said. According to organizers, about 20,000 people took part in the exercise based on the assumption that an area 40 kilometers from the plant was designated a no-entry zone due to radiation leakage. People wearing protective gear washed down the vehicles of evacuees from areas in the vicinity of the plant and students took their pets with them as they evacuated in the training exercise. (This article was written by Takio Murakami in Taipei, Akira Nakano in Seoul and Ken Matsui in Hameln.)

Protests in Japan

March 9, 2013

Fukushima residents hold anti-nuclear demonstration

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303090069>

FUKUSHIMA--**A citizens group held its 31st anti-nuclear demonstration in a busy shopping district here on March 8**, three days before the second anniversary of the triple disaster in the Tohoku region.

"We want to appeal to the people that dangerous nuclear reactors should be decommissioned," said Taiga Sato, a 27-year-old part-time worker who joined the demonstration.

The protesters, including residents, called for the abolition of nuclear power plants and expressed their opposition to the government's plan to restart idled reactors.

Fukushima Smile Project, the organizer of the rally, held its first anti-nuclear demonstration in August 2012.

The Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami struck on March 11, 2011, leading to the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in the prefecture.

Protesters in Japan demand end to nukes

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201303090093

March 09, 2013

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hundreds of people rallied in a Tokyo park March 9, demanding an end to atomic power, and vowing never to give up the fight, despite two years of little change after the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, northeastern Japan.

Gathering on a weekend ahead of the second anniversary of the March 11 quake and tsunami that sent Fukushima Dai-ichi plant into multiple meltdowns, demonstrators said they would never forget the world's worst nuclear catastrophe, and expressed alarm over the government's eagerness to restart reactors.

"I can't see what lies ahead. It looks hopeless, but if I give up now, it's over," said Akihiro Nakata, a 47-year-old owner of a construction company, with a drum to beat slung around his shoulder. "I'd rather die moving forward."

Only two of this nation's 50 working reactors are back online, partly because of continuous protests like March 9's, the first time such demonstrations have popped up in this nation since the 1960s movement against the Vietnam War.

People have thronged Tokyo parks on national holidays, and outside the Parliament building every Friday evening, drawing people previously unseen at political rallies, such as commuter "salarymen" and housewives.

Two years later, 160,000 people have left their homes around the plant, entire sections of nearby communities are still ghost-towns, and fears grow about cancer and other sicknesses the spewing radiation might bring.

But the new prime minister elected late last year, Shinzo Abe, hailing from a conservative party that fostered the pro-nuclear policies of modernizing Japan, wants to restart the reactors, maybe even build new ones.

The protesters said they were shocked by how the government was ignoring them.

"I am going to fight against those who act as though Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima never happened," Nobel Prize-winning writer Kenzaburo Oe told the crowd, referring to the atomic bombings preceding the end of World War II. "I am going to fight to prevent any more reactors from being restarted."

The demonstrators applauded, waving signs and lanterns that said, "Let's save the children," and "No nukes." Some were handing out leaflets, pleading to save animals abandoned in the no-go zone.

Kazuko Nihei, 36, selling trinkets and soap that mothers, like her, who had fled Fukushima, had made, hoping to raise funds for children's health checkups and their new lives in Tokyo.

"When the government talks about recovery, they are talking about infrastructure. When we talk about recovery, we are talking about the future of our children," she said.

A concert March 9 evening features Oscar and Grammy-winning musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, one of the most vocal opponents of nuclear power. Commemorative services are held throughout the nation March 11. The quake and tsunami killed nearly 19,000 people.

Less under the spotlight March 11 will be a class-action lawsuit being filed against the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co., the utility that operates Fukushima Dai-ichi, demanding all land, the natural environment and homes be restored to their state before March 11, 2011.

The lawsuit in Fukushima District Court is unusual in drawing people from all walks of life, including farmers, fishermen and housewives, because of the wording of the damage demand.

It has drawn 800 plaintiffs so far, a remarkable number in a conformist culture that frowns upon any challenge to the status quo, especially lawsuits. That number may grow as people join the lawsuit in coming months. A verdict is not expected for more than a year.

"We can't believe the government is thinking about restarting the reactors after the horrendous damage and human pain the accident has caused," Izutaro Managi, one of the lawyers, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "It is tantamount to victimizing the victims one more time."

Kazuko Ishige, a 66-year-old apartment manager, who was at the rally with a friend from Fukushima, said she was sick of the government's lies about the safety of nuclear plants.
"I am really angry," she said. "I am going to have to keep at it until I die."

Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons

March 12, 2013

Oslo conference highlights inhumanity of nuclear weapons

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201303120105

By HIROYUKI MAEGAWA/ Correspondent

OSLO--Atomic bomb survivors and their supporters welcomed the first international conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, even though the two-day meeting made little tangible progress toward banning atomic arms.

"I think what we hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) have been advocating for more than 60 years has finally been understood to some extent," said Terumi Tanaka, secretary-general of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo).

Tanaka, 80, took part in the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons conference, held in Oslo on March 4-5, as a member of the Japanese delegation.

Masao Tomonaga, director of the Japanese Red Cross Nagasaki Genbaku Hospital, presented research results showing a **higher cancer incidence among hibakusha**.

"Nuclear weapons damage even genes, and the only prescription is eliminating nuclear weapons," Tomonaga said. "I think we have been able to deliver that message."

But the chairman's summary, released by Norway, did not touch on eliminating nuclear weapons as a goal, saying only that the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons will be further explored.

The cautious stance reflects the absence of five declared nuclear states--which together possess almost all of the world's nuclear weapons--from the conference.

Kazakh people who were exposed to radiation due to Soviet-era nuclear tests also discussed their experiences at the conference, and Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said it is impossible to provide effective and sufficient humanitarian assistance once a nuclear weapon is detonated.

The conference participants agreed that the use of a nuclear weapon would cause such a "humanitarian crisis" that the international community could never respond to it adequately.

A Swiss diplomat who attended the conference cautioned that it is premature to expect a convention outlawing all nuclear weapons anytime soon, and instead urged a gradual approach to the issue.

The diplomat suggested that a group of countries that led the Oslo conference should mobilize efforts to **build up international public opinion against nuclear weapons**.

Antinuke protests everywhere

Source : NHK

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/daily/english/20130310_08.html

Anti-nuclear power protests staged in Europe

People opposed to nuclear energy are staging demonstrations in Europe ahead of March 11th, the 2nd anniversary of the nuclear accident in Japan.

In Germany, protesters rallied at 4 locations on Saturday. They demanded an immediate halt to the country's 9 nuclear reactors that are still operational. The government plans to close all nuclear plants by 2022.

Organizers say a total of 28,000 people took part in the demonstrations.

In the northern city of Hildesheim, protesters formed a human chain and demanded a halt to the operation of a nuclear plant near the city.

A letter sent from a group of Japanese mothers living in Fukushima was read to demonstrators attending a rally.

The mothers expressed concern about their children and the possible health effects from the nuclear accident.

Participants shouted anti-nuclear slogans in Japanese.

One participant said that the accident in Fukushima was a warning to Germany. He said that nuclear power puts future generations at constant risk.

Anti-nuclear demonstrations are planned in Berlin and elsewhere on Monday.

In Paris, about 20,000 demonstrators formed a human chain.

The event was jointly organized by 26 anti-nuclear groups in France.

Participants gathered at 18 locations in the city and began to march hand in hand at the same time.

Near an office of the French nuclear energy giant Areva, protesters shouted anti-nuclear slogans such as "no more nuclear plants" and "no more Fukushimas".

France has 58 nuclear reactors which generate nearly 80 percent of the country's electricity.

President Francois Hollande says the government will decrease the rate to 50 percent by 2025.

A recent poll suggests that French people supporting nuclear power outnumber opponents by a large margin.

Mar. 10, 2013 - Updated 00:03 UTC (09:03 JST)

Source :

<http://nuclear-news.net/2013/03/09/video-200000-protest-nuclear-power-taiwan/>

200,000 protest nuclear power – Taiwan

<http://enenews.com/video-200000-protest-nuclear-power>

Published: March 9th, 2013 at 11:33 am ET

By ENENews

CNA ENGLISH NEWS, March 9, 2013: *200,000 take part in Taiwan's anti-nuclear protest* [...] In what organizers called the largest anti-nuclear protest in Taiwan, an estimated 200,000 people took to the streets in several parts of the island on Saturday to call for the scrapping of nuclear power plants. The protest was held simultaneously in northern, central, southern and eastern Taiwan just two days before the second anniversary of the meltdown of Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant in the wake of the big earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011. [...] Later Saturday, a spokeswoman for the Presidential Office said President Ma Ying-jeou was willing to have dialogues with anti-nuclear groups and listen to their suggestions on how Taiwan can find alternatives for nuclear power. [...]

The China Post, March 10, 2013: [...] Over 100 civic groups joined the nationwide event, including the I am Human group and Victims of Nuclear Power, from Northern Taiwan. Despite the unseasonably hot and humid weather, people flooded into the street in front of the Presidential Office, with some even decked out in heavy costumes. Police estimates put attendance in Taipei at over 50,000, with some 8,000 each in Taichung and Kaohsiung. The event's main organizers, however, estimated that 120,000 protesters turned out in Taipei and 200,000 nationwide. [...]

Source : Deutsche Welle

<http://www.dw.de/thousands-protest-in-japan-on-eve-of-fukushima-nuclear-disaster-anniversary/a-16661934>

Thousands protest in Japan on eve of Fukushima nuclear disaster anniversary

Thousands of anti-nuclear protesters have gathered across Japan. The rallies come on the eve of the two-year anniversary of an earthquake and tsunami that caused the Fukushima disaster.

Tens of thousands of people converged on central Tokyo's Hibiya Park Sunday in opposition to nuclear power. Activists and scholars gave talks and musicians performed before sign-carrying crowds that marched through the government district of Kasumigaseki to parliament.

"I think it is adults' responsibility to achieve zero nuclear power, before we die," said one of the banners held by protesters.

Anti-nuclear protests held across Japan

"Sayonara, nuclear power," read another sign.

Other similar events were held around the country and local media are reporting that as many as 150 anti-nuclear events are planned for the weekend and on Monday.

Worst nuclear disaster in a generation

On March 11, 2011 an earthquake and tsunami killed more than 15,000 people in Japan, with several thousand still unaccounted for. The incident caused a meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which severely contaminated the vast farming region and forced more than 160,000 people to leave their homes.

It was the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986, and sparked widespread anti-nuclear sentiment. A recent poll found that around 70 percent of Japanese want to eventually phase out atomic energy all together.

Since the disaster, Japan has turned off all 50 of its nuclear reactors, but restarted two of them citing possible summertime power shortages.

The country's nuclear future could be set to change, however, after the December election of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who - along with his Liberal Democratic Party - has long been supportive of atomic energy. Abe has said he wants to restart offline reactors if they meet new safety standards.

dr/slk (AFP, Reuters)

Taiwan's gov't faces antinukes opposition

March 13, 2013

Taiwan's Ma points to Japan as role model for nuclear energy

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303130076>

By TAKIO MURAKAMI/ Correspondent

TAIPEI--Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou is taking heat from opposition parties and environmentalists by repeatedly justifying his administration's commitment to nuclear energy by referring to Japan as a role model it can learn from.

Ma has argued that even Japan, which suffered the world's worst nuclear disaster in 25 years in 2011, is not planning to pull the plug on nuclear power.

"Following the Fukushima disaster, Japan stopped operating its nuclear reactors and that resulted in higher electricity rates," Ma told a meeting of his ruling Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) on March 10.

"Many Japanese companies said they may accelerate their relocation overseas. Following a change of government, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he will not stick to the (previous administration's) plan to pull out of nuclear power."

He went on to explain that Taiwan has no choice but to rely on atomic energy.

"Japan's experience in turning around its nuclear power policy very much deserves learning from," Ma said.

Taiwan currently has three nuclear plants, which account for 20 percent of the island's total electricity output. A national referendum is expected to be held soon on proceeding with construction of a fourth nuclear plant, which is shaping up to be a major battleground on the issue.

Anti-nuclear forces staged demonstrations on March 9, two days ahead of the second anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which triggered the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. An estimated 200,000 people across Taiwan participated in the protests.

"The Fukushima nuclear accident has driven home to us that nuclear power is a very dangerous method for generating electricity," said one official with the Green Citizens' Action Alliance.

Media organizations close to the opposition bloc have published opinions critical of the government.

Demonstrations like "a beacon of light from a lighthouse"

March 16, 2013

Weekly anti-nuke protests still going strong, but with far fewer people

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303160052>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear demonstrations that have been a fixture in front of the prime minister's office in Tokyo on Friday nights for nearly a year are still drawing sizable crowds, but nowhere near as big as in the past.

Concerned about dwindling attendance, the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, the citizens group behind the protests, is wondering how it can sustain interest in this form of activism.

The protest, held March 15 to voice opposition to restarting Japan's idled nuclear reactors, was the 46th such rally.

The first one was held in March 2012, one year after the onset of the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. Only 300 people attended that time.

Organizers said the latest protest drew some 3,000 people, a far cry from the 200,000 who turned up in late June, immediately before the Noda administration restarted reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

This year, however, the protests have attracted crowds ranging in size from 2,500 to 13,000 each time, organizers said.

The Metropolitan Police Department had vastly lower estimates, putting peak attendance at around 21,000 in early July.

Even so, the police agree that the number of protesters is decreasing.

"Recently, the number of participants has been limited to several hundred," a police officer said.

Yoichiro Mori, a self-employed man from Tokyo, has been taking part in the demonstrations once a month since last July. On March 15, he left his job earlier than usual to ensure he would not be late for the protest.

The 28-year-old said he felt that "interest in the nuclear issue is waning," as reflected by the smaller crowds and fewer young people in attendance. "That's probably because it's difficult to feel how terrifying radiation is."

Mori tries to convey a sense of the crowd atmosphere through frequent posts on Twitter.

Misao Redwolf, a core member of MCAN, agreed that the numbers are falling, but insisted the issue will not go away.

"The decrease does not mean that the number of people who are hoping for the abolition of nuclear power plants is decreasing," she said. "By continuing to hold the rallies every week, the movement is serving like a beacon of light from a lighthouse."

In February, MCAN started the "No Nukes Magazine Project" to convey its message to people who have not taken part in the anti-nuclear demonstrations. To encourage people to do so, MCAN has distributed leaflets in front of train stations and elsewhere.

The first issue, titled, "Kihon-hen" (Basic chapter), outlines the current situation in Fukushima Prefecture and costs of nuclear power generation in easy-to-understand language.

It plans to publish more issues in the hope of attracting more weekly protesters.

A 44-year-old woman from Sagami-hara, Kanagawa Prefecture, who attended the rallies at their peak last summer said she stopped going because she felt the protests were ineffective.

"The current situation is not one we can change with demonstrations," she said. "It's meaningless just to shout loudly (at the rallies)."

She had expectations that the rallies would influence the government, but felt let down after the reactors at the Oi nuclear plant were restarted.

A 44-year-old graphic designer from Tokyo's Itabashi Ward who attended last summer's rallies had a similar experience.

After the pro-nuclear power Liberal Democratic Party retook the reins of government last December, she felt disappointed.

However, she doesn't think that her experience of having participated in the demonstrations is meaningless. But she eventually stopped going because the one-hour train ride became too much for her.

"Previously, politicians may have thought that whatever they do, the people will not complain about it," said the woman who used to attend rallies with her 5-year-old son. "But now we have been able to make them recognize that the people will not be silent anymore."

Chizuru Muto is one anti-nuke protester who has not given up. The 55-year-old hair and makeup artist from Tokyo's Meguro Ward has been taking part in the demonstrations since June 2012. Linking up with friends on Facebook, she has tried to ensure that at least one person, she or somebody she knew, would turn up at the Friday night rallies.

"If we say nothing, idle nuclear reactors will be restarted one after another," Muto said.

On March 15, the protest started at 6 p.m. in front of the prime minister's office in Nagatacho to the rhythm of drum beats and the chanting of slogans.

For a Fukushima without nukes

March 25, 2013

7,000 flock to rally for decommissioning of all reactors in Fukushima



Sakura Takano, a high school student serving as a messenger of peace, addresses an anti-nuclear power rally in the city of Fukushima on March 23. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130325p2a00m0na009000c.html>

FUKUSHIMA -- Some 7,000 people joined an anti-nuclear power rally here over the weekend, calling for the abolishment of all nuclear reactors in this disaster-hit prefecture, organizers have announced.

The rally, titled "Genpatsu no nai Fukushima o! Kenmin daishukai" (For a Fukushima without nuclear plants! Mass meeting for prefectural residents), was held in a gymnasium at this city's Azuma Sports Park on March 23.

Rally participants from in and outside the prefecture offered a silent prayer for the victims of the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami as well as those who died during the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster evacuation. The rally adopted a declaration calling on the central government and plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. to decommission all reactors in the prefecture.

Sakura Takano, 18, a high school senior from Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, was among seven prefectural residents who addressed the meeting about their predicament.

"We who have gone through the pain of the nuclear disaster have a mission to tell many people about it, so that the memory of the disaster does not fade," Takano told the crowd. She also referred to how local residents had been forced to get used to the sight of the now-ubiquitous radiation monitoring posts, and to being torn from their friends and family.

Namie & antinuke opposition

March 29, 2013

Local opposition spelled end for Namie-Odaka nuclear plant

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303290079>



Long removed from his hometown, Sakae Ishida recalled how opposition to a planned nuclear power plant quickly faded in Namie, Fukushima Prefecture.

Ishida, 64, who had repeatedly petitioned the Fukushima prefectural government to retract the Namie-Odaka plant construction plan, ended up selling a 0.4-hectare plot of land and rice paddies at the site to Tohoku Electric Power Co. for about 20 million yen (\$212,000) two decades ago.

The change in attitude came after Namie leaders and residents saw the rising fortunes of nearby towns that hosted a nuclear power plant.

That facility, however, was the now-stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Today, Namie is deserted, its dreams of prosperity dashed. All 21,000 residents of the town remain evacuated because of the nuclear accident that started in 2011.

"I think it's only natural (that the plant construction plan was aborted) because we've had that horrible disaster," said Ishida, who now lives in Minami-Soma.

Tohoku Electric announced March 28 that it has abandoned plans to build the Namie-Odaka nuclear plant. The site--about 10 kilometers north of the Fukushima No. 1 plant--would straddle the municipalities of Namie and Minami-Soma and contain a reactor with an output of 825 megawatts.

Tohoku Electric President Makoto Kaiwa stated the obvious when explaining why the project was scrapped.

"There was a special factor with the planned Namie-Odaka nuclear plant: proximity to the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant," he told reporters on March 28 at the utility's headquarters in Sendai. "That fueled opposition in the hosting communities."

Namie hosts 95 percent of the 1.5 square km landmass of the planned plant site. Tohoku Electric has acquired 1.25 square km of that figure.

But it was mainly the fierce local opposition to the plant project that led Tohoku Electric officials to conclude it would be difficult to press ahead with the plan.

It wasn't always this way.

Namie in 1967 adopted a resolution to host the Namie-Odaka plant, a year before the project was announced.

"Initially, most of the residents who owned land on the planned plant site opposed the project," said Ishida, from the Tanashio district of Namie.

Opinions changed after Tokyo Electric Power Co. started operations at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in 1971. Workers remained in the host towns of Futaba and Okuma, government subsidies poured in, and brand-new buildings popped up.

"Opponents almost disappeared because we saw, under our nose, how those towns prospered," said Ishida, who sold his land to Tohoku Electric 20 years ago.

But in March 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake struck, spawning a giant tsunami that knocked out power to the Fukushima No. 1 plant and caused meltdowns at three reactors.

In December 2011, the Namie town assembly scrapped its 1967 resolution and espoused a departure from nuclear energy in its rebuilding blueprint. Minami-Soma also adopted a resolution seeking the cancellation of the nuclear plant project.

"The plight of the nuclear disaster is engraved deep in our townspeople's minds," Namie Mayor Tamotsu Baba told Nobuaki Abe, an executive vice president with Tohoku Electric. "I highly appreciate your decision to end the plan."

With the scrapping of the Namie-Odaka project, 11 new nuclear reactors remain under planning across Japan. Construction has started on three of them: Chugoku Electric Power Co.'s Shimane nuclear plant No. 3 reactor in Shimane Prefecture, Electric Power Development Co.'s Oma nuclear plant in Aomori Prefecture, and TEPCO's Higashidori nuclear plant No. 1 reactor in Aomori Prefecture.

The previous administration led by the Democratic Party of Japan approved the continued construction of those three reactors, but it planned to oppose the building plans for the others.

After the Liberal Democratic Party ousted the DPJ from power in December, the new administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe scrapped the DPJ policy in a bid to build new reactors.

Tohoku Electric's decision to drop the Namie-Odaka nuclear plant plan is the first since the nuclear disaster. But the company has not given up on its plan to construct a new No. 2 reactor at its Higashidori nuclear plant, which lies adjacent to a plant of the same name being built by TEPCO.

However, calls for a departure from nuclear energy remain.

Although Japan has 50 nuclear reactors, only two of them--both at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture--are currently running.

A senior utility official said he has "virtually given up on hopes" of seeing the restarts of aged nuclear reactors, in service for more than 40 years, and of reactors at plant sites over suspected active geological fault lines.

Public opinion is the major factor working against the restarts.

"In view of opposition among the residents of hosting communities and the general public, I don't believe (the idled reactors) can all be brought back online," the utility official said. "We'd be lucky to have half of them restarted."

(This article was written by Shinichi Fujiwara, Miho Tanaka, Junko Watanabe and Kentaro Uechi.)

First anniversary of Friday night protests in Tokyo

March 30, 2013

- Undeterred: Participants march through Tokyo's Nagata-cho political hub Friday evening urging the government to abandon nuclear power, continuing a weekly demonstration that has lasted a year. | KYODO



First anniversary of weekly antinuclear rallies outside prime minister's office marked

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/03/30/national/first-anniversary-of-weekly-antinuclear-rallies-outside-prime-ministers-office-marked/#.UVauqjf1tEs>

The first anniversary was marked Friday of the weekly antinuclear demonstrations in front of the prime minister's office that have grown steadily partly via the popularity of social media.

At the latest rally, the 48th organized by the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, demonstrators chanted "Get rid of nuclear power plants" and "Don't restart them."

According to the organizer, people have taken to the streets in Tokyo's Nagata-cho political district every Friday from 6 p.m. since March 29, 2012, to call for the elimination of nuclear power in light of the Fukushima atomic plant crisis that started on March 11, 2011.

The demonstrations originally attracted around 300 people but grew drastically as word spread through social media networks, including Twitter and Facebook.

Within three months, the weekly rallies started to draw more than 100,000 participants as the then-ruling Democratic Party of Japan moved to restart two reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Since late last year, several thousand people have been turning out for the rallies.

Misao Redwolf, who played a key role in organizing the rallies, said, "It is very unpleasant to mark the first anniversary, but we have to do it (the rally) as not all reactors have stopped operation yet.

"We believe it is important to continue providing a space where anyone can join in" to protest, she said, adding that antinuclear demonstrations have been held in many places across Japan at the same time each week.

Makio Tahara, 65, who attended the rally with his 10-year-old grandchild, said, "It is hard to achieve a withdrawal from nuclear power acting as an individual, but whether it is effective or not, it is important to express our feelings."

Anti-nuke activists mark 1st anniversary of weekly protests

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201303300046>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear activists gathered outside the prime minister's office on March 29 to call for an end to Japan's dependency on nuclear power and mark the one-year anniversary of the Friday night protests.

Organizers said 6,000 people took part in the rally to also protest restarts of idled nuclear reactors. The first of the weekly protests outside the Prime Minister's Official Residence in central Tokyo was held on March 29, 2012.

The protests stem from the nuclear disaster in Fukushima Prefecture triggered by the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

The anniversary rally started at 6 p.m. and lasted for two hours. Protesters chanted anti-nuke slogans and held up placards. One of them read: "Defend the children," while another read, "Return our homeland."

"I had been getting on with day-to-day life and found that the nuclear power issue was no longer uppermost in my mind," said 38-year-old Tomoko Matsumura, who brought her fifth-grade daughter to participate in the weekly protest for the first time. "I heard it was the first anniversary, and that persuaded me to join."

Gov't wants tents removed

April 9, 2013

Activists protest government suit to have anti-nuke tents removed

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201304090068

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A citizens' group that set up three tents in front of a ministry office building that have served as a rallying point for anti-nuclear demonstrators said April 8 it will fight a government lawsuit demanding their removal.

The central government filed a lawsuit on March 29 against two members of the citizens' group, Taro Fuchigami and Taichi Masakiyo. Fuchigami, a 70-year-old leader of the group, said they want to keep the tents in place and **will challenge the government's legal action in court.**

"I'd like to appeal to the public for the importance of the tents," Fuchigami said. "They represent the public's voice for a nuclear power free Japan."

The tents were set up on the grounds of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's office building in Tokyo's Kasumigaseki district on Sept. 11, 2011, six months after the Great East Japan Earthquake set off the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Government officials said the tents need to be removed because they disrupt the day-to-day activities of the ministry.

"We requested that the activists remove the tents, but nothing has been resolved," a top industry ministry official said. "It will be best to ask the court to judge the case objectively."

Although crowds visiting the tents have become smaller since they were first pitched, the anti-nuke protest group still receives encouragement and support from visitors from all across Japan.

"This is the only place where people without a hometown can have our voices heard," said Yukiko Kameya, who was forced to evacuate to Tokyo from Fukushima Prefecture, and who visits the tents once a week. "I never want to see the tents disappear," said the 68-year-old evacuee.

Katsutaka Idogawa, who served as mayor of Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, until February, visited the tents on April 6. During his term as mayor, Idogawa pursued the government's responsibility for the nuclear disaster.

"State-owned land belongs to the public," the 66-year-old former mayor said. "We want the government to listen to the voices of the public."

According to a government official, the tents were originally constructed by a group that was founded in 2007 by members of Zengakuren, a former student association that participated in the 1960 student movement against the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. The government assumes that the group still plays a central role in activities involving the tents.

Since Sept. 11, 2011, the tents have occupied government-owned land without authorization, and the citizens' group has been continuing its activities against restarting the nation's idle nuclear power reactors, according to the court claim.

Good news: People can change

April 9, 2013

Dr. Gordon Edwards explains the background of Chairman Jaczko's decision:

<http://akiomatsumura.com/2013/04/former-chairman-of-nuclear-regulatory-commission-reactors-should-be-phased-out.html>

Gregory Jaczko, Chairman of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission until last year, has arrived at a very basic realization: every potentially dangerous machine should have an emergency “off” switch that shuts everything down completely. And nuclear power reactors don’t have one. So, he concludes, all power reactors should be phased out.

How many action adventure movies show the hero disabling an explosive device or cutting the power to some monstrous killing machine just in the nick of time — mere seconds before total disaster erupts? In the blink of an eye the device or machine goes from malevolent to benign — from catastrophic to harmless — because someone pushed the “off” switch.

But a nuclear power reactor cannot be turned off completely, no matter what the emergency may be. Talk about a design flaw! Imagine a car that can’t be stopped, or a fire that cannot be put out.

Yes, there are “fast shutdown systems” in every nuclear reactor that can stop the nuclear chain reaction in less than two seconds, and they usually work quite well. The Three Mile Island reactor was “shut off” instantly, at the first sign of trouble; it only melted down later. The three operating Fukushima Dai-ichi reactors all “shut themselves off” automatically before the tsunami hit; but they all melted down anyway.

The problem is, shutting off the nuclear chain reaction does not stop the heat production. And it is that unstoppable process that keeps adding more heat to the core, driving the temperature spiraling upwards towards the melting point of the fuel — at a few thousand degrees on whatever scale you are using.

Why doesn’t the heat stop? It’s because we do not know how to shut off radioactivity.

There is an incredible inventory of fiercely radioactive byproducts created in the core of the reactor during normal operation. Even after the fission process is stopped, heat continues to be generated at an awesome rate simply through the radioactive decay (disintegration) of the unstable atoms that have accumulated in the core as a result of the fissioning of nuclear fuel.

This heat, called “decay heat”, is more than enough to melt the core of the reactor and everything else in the core area of the reactor. Immediately after “shutdown”, the decay heat is about 7 percent of full power heat.

For a reactor designed to produce 1000 megawatts of electricity, there is normally about 3000 megawatts of heat being generated. If such a reactor is suddenly shut down, about 7% of those 3000 megawatts of heat is still being produced by the relentless radioactive disintegration of the waste byproducts in the irradiated nuclear fuel.

That’s more than 200 megawatts of heat — and it cannot be stopped.

Emergency cooling systems can remove the heat, but if the reactor is knocked out, who’s to say the emergency cooling systems aren’t also knocked out?

A reactor that can’t be stopped is like hell on a handcart. And they’re all like that.

Gordon Edwards.

Ex-Regulator Says Reactors Are Flawed

By Matthew L. Wald, New York Times, April 8, 2013

<http://tinyurl.com/d9f4pnu>

WASHINGTON — All 104 nuclear power reactors now in operation in the United States have a safety problem that cannot be fixed and they should be replaced with newer technology, the former chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said on Monday. Shutting them all down at once is not practical, he said, but he supports phasing them out rather than trying to extend their lives.

The position of the former chairman, Gregory B. Jaczko, is not unusual in that various anti-nuclear groups take the same stance. But it is highly unusual for a former head of the nuclear commission to so bluntly criticize an industry whose safety he was previously in charge of ensuring.

Asked why he did not make these points when he was chairman, Dr. Jaczko said in an interview after his remarks, “I didn’t really come to it until recently.”

“I was just thinking about the issues more, and watching as the industry and the regulators and the whole nuclear safety community continues to try to figure out how to address these very, very difficult problems,” which were made more evident by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan, he said. “Continuing to put Band-Aid on Band-Aid is not going to fix the problem.”

Dr. Jaczko made his remarks at the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference in Washington in a session about the Fukushima accident. Dr. Jaczko said that many American reactors that had received

permission from the nuclear commission to operate for 20 years beyond their initial 40-year licenses probably would not last that long. He also rejected as unfeasible changes proposed by the commission that would allow reactor owners to apply for a second 20-year extension, meaning that some reactors would run for a total of 80 years.

Dr. Jaczko cited a well-known characteristic of nuclear reactor fuel to continue to generate copious amounts of heat after a chain reaction is shut down. That “decay heat” is what led to the Fukushima meltdowns. The solution, he said, was probably smaller reactors in which the heat could not push the temperature to the fuel’s melting point.

The nuclear industry disagreed with Dr. Jaczko’s assessment. “U.S. nuclear energy facilities are operating safely,” said Marvin S. Fertel, the president and chief executive of the Nuclear Energy Institute, the industry’s trade association. “That was the case prior to Greg Jaczko’s tenure as Nuclear Regulatory Commission chairman. It was the case during his tenure as N.R.C. chairman, as acknowledged by the N.R.C.’s special Fukushima response task force and evidenced by a multitude of safety and performance indicators. It is still the case today.”

Dr. Jaczko resigned as chairman last summer after months of conflict with his four colleagues on the commission. He often voted in the minority on various safety questions, advocated more vigorous safety improvements, and was regarded with deep suspicion by the nuclear industry. A former aide to the Senate majority leader, Harry Reid of Nevada, he was appointed at Mr. Reid’s instigation and was instrumental in slowing progress on a proposed nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain, about 100 miles from Las Vegas.

A version of this article appeared in print on April 9, 2013, on page A16 of the New York edition with the headline: Ex-Regulator Says Reactors Are Flawed.

Antinukes looking for new strategies beyond protests

May 4, 2013

- People joined a weekly protest in front of the prime minister's office last Friday, but the number of participants had plummeted compared to last June and July. | KAZUAKI NAGATA



National / Social Issues

Antinuclear drive in search of new strategies

Reactor foes risk burnout unless LDP stonewalling can be overcome

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/04/national/antinuclear-drive-in-search-of-new-strategies/#.UYPn0kpsFEs>

by Kazuaki Nagata
Staff Writer

The Fukushima nuclear crisis struck a nerve with Japan's normally passive public, prompting many to raise their voices against atomic power and take to the streets to voice their anger.

But momentum for phasing out atomic energy appears to have weakened since the pronuclear Liberal Democratic Party won December's general election by a landslide, pledging to review the ousted Democratic Party of Japan's vow to eliminate nuclear power in the 2030s.

While antinuclear activists and politicians are trying to find new ways of keeping their hopes alive, they are struggling to get their views reflected in the policies of the LDP-led administration.

These lobbyists say that since the majority of the public hasn't changed its mind about the dangers of atomic energy, it is critical to take the antinuclear movement to the next level by drafting persuasive, concrete plans that can actually uproot the deeply ingrained nuclear industry.

"I am deeply worried" that the movement against atomic energy is fizzling out, said Susumu Shinbo, 65, of Chiba Prefecture while protesting at the weekly antinuclear rally by the prime minister's office on April 12.

The rally was the 50th so far, but participation has clearly dropped. The organizers once claimed that more than 100,000 people showed up.

The protests burgeoned when the previous DPJ government decided to let Kansai Electric Power Co. restart two reactors at its Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture — the first to go online since all atomic units nationwide were idled after the Fukushima meltdowns tainted the northeast with radiation.

Around the time of the July 2012 restarts, tens of thousands of protesters had inundated the street leading to the prime minister's office for weeks. But last month's rally saw less than 1,000 people show up — barely enough to fill the sidewalks.

Some of those present argued the figure is irrelevant.

"Less participation doesn't mean momentum has weakened" because most of the public is still strongly opposed to the use of nuclear power, said 39-year-old Tokyoite Tomoko Kawai.

But with the LDP expected to push for a reversion to atomic power, she stressed that "it is important that individuals keep taking actions of their own."

To avoid losing impetus, activists are looking beyond protests and devising new strategies. On April 15, they set up the Citizens' Commission on Nuclear Energy to draft a zero-nuclear blueprint by next spring to propose to the government and public.

The panel of experts and general members of the public is headed by Harutoshi Funabashi, a Hosei University sociology professor. It also includes Kyushu University Vice President Hitoshi Yoshioka, who sat on the government's Fukushima investigation panel, University of Tokyo professor emeritus Hiromitsu Ino and Masashi Goto, a former nuclear engineer at Toshiba Corp.

"Right after the crisis occurred at the Fukushima No. 1 plant, it was like all the public felt guilty about the use of nuclear power and the cries against atomic energy were so loud and clear," said Hiroyuki Kawai, who represents the commission's main sponsor, a private group. But in the past two years, "it seems many have forgotten the terror of the Fukushima disaster."

Kawai stressed that a convincing master plan is required to re-energize the movement. "We need to draft a policy that everyone will have no choice but to accept," he said.

Lawmakers concerned about nuclear energy have apparently reached the same conclusion.

Tomoko Abe, who heads Nippon Mirai no To (Tomorrow Party of Japan), said the roots of nuclear power pervaded society because it was a key source of energy that became vital to sustaining the profitability of regional utilities and the municipalities hosting their atomic plants.

It won't be easy to unravel this nexus of nuclear interests, Abe said.

"There is a huge gap between people's desire to end Japan's nuclear dependency and how difficult (that) is in reality," said Abe, who jointly heads a multiparty group of Diet lawmakers targeting nuclear power.

Abe said her group is examining the best way to phase out nuclear, including bills to decommission reactors and support their host communities. But how that legislation will get passed is unclear at a time when the LDP and junior coalition partner New Komeito have a solid grip on the Lower House and are gunning for the Upper House in July.

Abe's 96-member group was cut in half by the House of Representatives election. It has since regained 10, bringing it back up to 58, but is having difficulty persuading more to join.

“Because the LDP has grown so powerful, it is very difficult (to promote a zero-nuclear policy) through cross-party efforts,” said coleader Shoichi Kondo.

Although the House of Councilors poll presents a chance for the antinuclear lobby to make a comeback, Kondo said it will be hard to turn the issue into a focal point because the LDP seems to be trying to sidestep it.

For instance, in the April 28 Upper House by-election in Yamaguchi Prefecture, where Chugoku Electric Power Co. plans to build a new nuclear plant in Kaminoseki, LDP candidate Kiyoshi Ejima fudged his stance on the project. Kondo claimed this prevented atomic energy from becoming an issue in the race, allowing Ejima to trounce his antinuclear opponents.

“The LDP is avoiding the issue of nuclear power policy for this summer’s Upper House election. They said they will review the DPJ’s policy (of ending nuclear power by 2040), but didn’t say if they will promote nuclear power, so it’s very vague,” he said.

To increase the number of politicians backing the zero-nuclear option, activists launched the **advocacy group Ryokucha Kai (Green Tea Party)** on April 24 to provide financial support to antinuclear candidates running in national elections.

Hideaki Takemura, an executive at Tokyo-based Energy Green Co. and head of Ryokucha Kai, voiced confidence that **nuclear power can become a core topic in the House of Councilors poll**, along with constitutional revision and the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade framework.

“The Fukushima crisis is an ongoing issue — people know that in their hearts, so they need to be more informed,” Takemura said.

Ryokucha Kai will soon select candidates to endorse for the Upper House election and offer them financial support, Takemura said, but it won’t be backing anyone running for the LDP or New Komeito.

Marching to abolish nuclear weapons

May 7, 2013

Three-month peace march sets out for Hiroshima

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/07/national/three-month-peace-march-sets-out-for-hiroshima/#.UYjQLUpsFEs>

Around 1,000 people set out Monday on a three-month peace march from Tokyo to Hiroshima, calling for the abolishment of nuclear weapons and nuclear power generation, according to organizers.

Holding up a banner reading, "Let's abolish nuclear weapons," and with stickers that read "YES PEACE" on their arms, the marchers shouted slogans such as, "We don't need nuclear weapons" and "We don't need nuclear power," as they departed.

Before the start, Malaya Fabros, a 34-year-old antinuclear advocate from the Philippines, called on the marchers to join forces so that a peaceful world without nuclear weapons can be realized.

Some of the participants are planning to walk all the way from Tokyo to Hiroshima, while others will walk part of the relays toward the city that was devastated by a U.S. atomic bombing in 1945 in World War II, according to organizers.

The marchers are scheduled to reach Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park on Aug. 4, two days before the anniversary of the bombing.

Yasuo Shiose, 74, who was orphaned at age 7 when he lost his parents and two older brothers in the bombing of Hiroshima, said, "I will walk with the aim achieving a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons and wars."

Is Japan negating its own experience of nuclear horror?

May 10, 2013

Preventing use of nuclear weapons

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/05/11/editorials/preventing-use-of-nuclear-weapons/#.UY0YyEpsFEs>

Japan recently refused to support an international joint statement which stressed that "It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances."

The Japanese government's failure to sign the statement is regrettable in view of the simple fact that Japan became the first nation in history to suffer from the use of nuclear weapons through the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. In addition, a nuclear catastrophe happened at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, causing great hardship to residents of Fukushima Prefecture.

Some 150,000 people from the prefecture are still forced to live away from their homes because the homes are located in areas contaminated by radioactive substances from the plant.

The Japanese are among the few on Earth who have experienced the dread of exposure to radiation whether it is from a nuclear weapon or from a nuclear power plant accident. Many Japanese citizens will not accept the government's decision not to sign the statement, which was supported on April 24 by 74 countries at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in Geneva.

The joint statement said in part, "It is a shared responsibility of all States to prevent the use of nuclear weapons." It also said, "The only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons will never be used again is through their total elimination." It would not be far-fetched to say that by not supporting it, Japan has negated its own hard experience it could use to accelerate moves toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The government explained that it refused to support the statement after taking into consideration the security situation Japan finds itself in. It is apparently referring to the protection provided by the United States' nuclear umbrella.

But the government has the responsibility to answer the question of what it thinks of the horrible and numerous deaths caused by the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, the physical and psychological sufferings of the bombing survivors, and the continuing sufferings and fears of Fukushima people.

It should consider the possibility that the more countries support the joint statement, the more pressure it will exert on countries that have nuclear weapons, thus deterring them from using nuclear weapons. An attitude as shown by Japan could weaken worldwide efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and even strengthen the belief that nuclear weapons are useful and usable.

Pointing to "the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons," the joint statement said, "the catastrophic effects of a nuclear weapon detonation, whether by accident, miscalculation or design, cannot be adequately addressed." The government also should pay attention to this point.

Four NATO countries — Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg and Norway — supported the joint statement although they are protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Japan should study their thinking and use the study results to change its attitude toward international efforts to prevent the use of nuclear weapons.

"I wonder if I can ever have children in the future"

May 13, 2013

A-bomb survivor passes on wisdom to Fukushima kids

83-year-old wants to help youths overcome feeling of abandonment

by Hiroki Sato and Kentaro Okada

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/05/13/national/a-bomb-survivor-passes-on-wisdom-to-fukushima-kids/#.UY-9W0psFEs>

NAGASAKI/HIROSHIMA – “I wonder if I can ever have children in the future?”

These words were written in a note from a Fukushima high school girl to 83-year-old Masahito Hirose in the fall of 2011, outlining her worries about the health effects from radiation. The girl and her classmates had visited Nagasaki on a school field trip and listened to Hirose speak about his experiences as a survivor of the 1945 U.S. atomic bombings.

This prompted Hirose to decide to use his own experience of living with the impact of radiation to support young people in Fukushima Prefecture in the long term.

In March 2012, five atomic-bomb survivor groups in Nagasaki opposed arrangements for some of the debris from the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, which triggered the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear disaster, to be processed in other parts of the country.

Although the major purpose of the arrangement was to help disaster-struck regions overwhelmed by the debris, such opposition was not uncommon, as many people nationwide feared this would further spread the radiation contamination.

But Hirose worried that such opposition from atomic-bomb survivors themselves, who knew firsthand what it was to be affected by radiation, may make people in the March 2011 disaster zones feel they had been abandoned. So as a member of the groups, he immediately proposed finding ways to show solidarity and extend support to those in the disaster-struck regions.

Two years have passed since the crisis erupted and the high school students who wrote to Hirose have since graduated. When he emailed them, many came back with positive and forward-looking responses, such as, “I want to continue to think about the issues I’ve experienced (through the disaster) in university.”

“I hope to continue to watch them grow,” Hirose said.

Along with other atomic-bomb survivors in Nagasaki, Hirose set up a group in February to liaise between Fukushima and Nagasaki. It is planning to arrange for lectures by survivors about their experiences of the bombing at high schools in Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture.

“The day will definitely come when the expertise and experiences accumulated here from the atomic bombing will become useful in Fukushima,” Hirose said. “I want to keep conveying the message that Nagasaki will never abandon Fukushima.”

Meanwhile, in Hiroshima, the other city to have suffered an atomic bombing, 80-year-old Mitsuo Kodama’s approach to raising public awareness about the horrors of radiation has drawn renewed attention since the Fukushima disaster.

Kodama, who was 12 when exposed to radiation from the Hiroshima A-bomb in 1945, shows people a photo of his damaged chromosome.

“Never again should mankind create somebody like me,” he said.

It was in the fall of 2007 when Kodama finally learned for the first time about the amount of radiation he was exposed to — about 4,600 millisieverts, according to tests by the Radiation Effects Research Foundation.

His exposure was so high it has only appeared in “a handful of people,” even in the foundation’s records, which cover long-term studies of some 120,000 A-bomb survivors and others. It is estimated that over 90 percent of people exposed to that much radiation have died.

In Kodama’s case, of the 100 cells tested, 102 chromosomal abnormalities were found.

Kodama was in a junior high school building about 870 meters from ground zero in Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945. Of some 300 classmates, only 19 survived. Soon after, he suffered from various acute symptoms, such as fever and loss of hair. He has had cancer surgery 19 times so far.

He understands that a case like his — having survived the blast from such close distance — is rare. Yet, he also constantly feels disappointed and regretful. As there are so few like him, “It is so difficult to get people to understand the horror of radiation,” he said.

It may not be simple to compare radiation exposure from an A-bomb to long-term exposure from a nuclear plant accident, but “radiation gnaws at the human body far into the future,” Kodama said.

“We must get rid of it from the face of the Earth. I want to pass on my experience to the people of Fukushima too.”

see also:

May 12, 2013

A-bomb survivors pass on own experiences to support Fukushima

NAGASAKI/HIROSHIMA (Kyodo) -- "I wonder if I can ever have children in the future?"

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130512p2a00m0na007000c.html>

What's behind exporting nukes

May 14, 2013

Export of nuclear technology

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/05/14/editorials/export-of-nuclear-technology/#.UZEzSUpsFEs>

In his recent visits abroad, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe signed agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Turkey that will enable the export of Japanese nuclear power plant technology to them. The Abe administration is also pushing talks to facilitate the conclusion of similar agreements with Saudi Arabia and Brazil.

Mr. Abe is trying to promote the export of nuclear technology at a time when the nuclear crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant remains ongoing and many Fukushima

residents still live in fear of exposure to radioactive substances released by the plant. Some 150,000 of them still cannot return to their homes and communities due to radioactive contamination. In addition, important questions concerning the cause of the Fukushima nuclear crisis have yet to be resolved despite the studies by investigation committees set up by the government and the Diet.

Mr. Abe also should realize that export of nuclear power plant technology could contribute to acceleration of nuclear proliferation as the same nuclear technology used to generate electricity can also be used to produce material for nuclear weapons. Mr. Abe must remember that Saudi Arabia has not signed an Additional Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency — a document designed to enhance the international nuclear watchdog's ability to find undeclared nuclear-related activities and radioactive materials.

The possibility cannot be ruled out that if Iran develops the capability to manufacture nuclear weapons, Saudi Arabia may consider arming itself with nuclear weapons. North Korea declared that it will use nuclear power only for civilian purposes. But it pushed forward with a nuclear weapons program and is now believed to possess nuclear bombs.

The important lesson from the Fukushima catastrophe is that nuclear power generation is an extremely difficult technology to manage and that accidents can result that cause irreparable damage to the environment and human life.

The Fukushima fiasco has exposed the simple fact that Japan has failed to properly manage its nuclear technology. Mr. Abe must answer the question of what he thinks of the nuclear crisis at Fukushima No. 1 and its implications, and explain why he is trying to sell Japanese nuclear technology at a time when the causes of the Fukushima nuclear accident are not clearly known.

Turkey plans to construct four reactors at Sinop in the northern part of the country facing the Black Sea. The total cost exceeds ¥2 trillion and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd., plans to increase its involvement in the project following Japan's acquisition of preferential negotiating rights. But Turkey is a quake-prone country like Japan. Mr. Abe should explain whether Japan's government and manufacturers of nuclear power technology will be in a position to assume responsibility should an accident happen at a nuclear power plant overseas that was built using Japanese technology.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority has just started studying how the 3/11 quake affected the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Mr. Abe is pushing the export of nuclear power plants before the effect of quakes is fully understood. Such a policy is irresponsible.

May 13, 2013

Exporting nukes "irresponsible"

May 18, 2013

Shut Monju down permanently

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/05/18/editorials/shut-monju-down-permanently/#.UZZ8V0psFEs>

The Nuclear Regulation Authority on Wednesday decided to order the Japan Atomic Energy Agency to not engage in further preparatory work to restart the trouble-plagued Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor until the operator improves its safety management to prevent a recurrence of trouble. Monju, located in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, is a core component of Japan's nuclear fuel cycle project along with the spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture.

Monju has been inoperative for most of the past 19 years while Rokkasho reprocessing plant's full operation has been postponed 19 times due to a series of problems. Given this troubling history and the JAEA's slipshod safety management, the logical conclusion should be to decommission the Monju reactor and end the nuclear fuel cycle project. The NRA should unambiguously order the JAEA not to restart Monju.

The NRA pointed out that the JAEA had made light of the need to ensure safety at Monju and failed to inspect nearly 10,000 reactor components in an after 2010. Making matters worse, JAEA head Mr. Atsuyuki Suzuki, who resigned Friday, said that the failure to inspect the components was only a procedural matter and did not cause safety problems. Yet among the components are more than 50 parts vital for the safety of the reactor, including a neutron detector that reveals radiation leaks. His attitude is deplorable.

NRA head Mr. Shunichi Tanaka said that the JAEA lacks a basic understanding of safety. Clearly the JAEA has learned nothing from the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe, which was caused in part by lax management.

The Monju reactor achieved criticality in April 1994 but was shut down in December 1995 due to a sodium coolant leak and fire. Subsequently it was found that the operator tried to cover up the seriousness of the accident. In May 2010, the reactor was restarted but it was halted again before reaching full output because fuel-loading equipment fell into the reactor vessel that August. Nearly ¥1 trillion has been spent on the Monju project. The reactor requires about ¥20 billion in funding annually even while offline.

In a nuclear fuel cycle, uranium and plutonium are extracted through the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. A fast-breeder reactor uses plutonium as fuel and theoretically is capable of producing more plutonium than it burns. But the reprocessing also produces highly radioactive waste and the vitrification technology needed to safely store it has not been established. Other countries have abandoned their nuclear fuel cycle projects because of high costs and technical difficulties. Because Monju is offline, the power industry tried to use plutonium separated from spent nuclear fuel in ordinary light water reactors. But this so-called pluthermal approach has hit a snag because of the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

Despite the enormous costs and problems involved in the nuclear fuel cycle project, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says he will push ahead with the project. He should heed the opinions of the NRA experts and shut this dangerous reactor down.

The impact of closing Tsuruga

May 17, 2013 not online

EDITORIAL: Tsuruga should be model for breaking free of nuclear energy

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201305170048>

Keeping things as they are became practically impossible now that an expert panel has concluded that an active fault line runs directly under the No. 2 reactor of the Tsuruga nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The panel is under the Nuclear Regulatory Authority, which was formed from a lesson of the March 2011 disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

“What else can we say, but it is fortunate that no accident has occurred until now,” a panel member said. If the active fault moves and leads to a major accident, residents of Tsuruga city will be the first who will have to escape. Lake Biwako, which supplies water to the Kansai region, is only 40 kilometers away. Natural disasters strike without warning.

However, Tsuruga Mayor Kazuharu Kawase is opposing the panel’s conclusion, saying it is not final. Some proponents of nuclear power generation in the local community say that if they can buy some time, the administration of Shinzo Abe, which supports restarting idled nuclear reactors, will come to the rescue.

The central government has been providing subsidies to local governments that host nuclear power plants. Some people disparagingly say Tsuruga is putting up resistance for money.

Let's stop and think. To aim at realizing a society that does not rely on nuclear energy, we need to squarely address serious impacts that the decommissioning of nuclear reactors may have on local communities that host them.

Tsuruga was once a thriving port city. But as the center of the economy shifted to Pacific coastal areas, it accepted four nuclear reactors to serve as the main pillar of the local economy.

However, the Fugen prototype advanced thermal reactor is in the process of decommissioning. After the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, prospects for restarting the aging No. 1 reactor at the Tsuruga plant remain dim.

There are also no prospects for restarting the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor after revelations of neglect in carrying out safety inspections. If the Tsuruga No. 2 reactor is also decommissioned, it is likely that Tsuruga will have no workable nuclear reactor for the first time in 43 years.

The local economy that takes for granted the presence of nuclear power plants will be shaken from its foundation. In particular, the impact on employment will be great. Of the approximately 68,000 people who live in Tsuruga, about 5,000 work at nuclear power plants and related facilities. Another 5,000 are also engaged in work such as the hotel industry, which is inseparable from nuclear power plants. **When their families are included, tens of thousands of people rely on nuclear power plants to earn a living.**

The impact on municipal finance is also serious. In exchange for hosting nuclear power plants, Tsuruga received a total of 50 billion yen (\$489 million) in government subsidies. Including such revenues as fixed property taxes on nuclear plants, one-fifth of the city's budget is made up of nuclear industry-related income. The government subsidies are also used to cover part of the medical costs of citizens and labor costs of fire department employees.

While opposing the decision on the one hand, Tsuruga Mayor Kawase said, "Since it will take 30 to 40 years to decommission a nuclear reactor, a special company is needed for the process."

"One option is to disseminate technology to secure nuclear safety to the world," he also said. If such a shift materializes, Tsuruga can be the model of a community that broke with nuclear power generation.

A local government that accepted the national policy of promoting nuclear energy is trying to sever its ties with nuclear power plants. How should the national government and power consumption centers such as the Kansai region support such attempts?

With so many nuclear power facilities, Tsuruga has been dubbed the “Ginza of nuclear power plants.” It is time we come up with the wisdom and various means of support to help Tsuruga cast off the nickname.

Opposition to nukes illegal?

May 24, 2013

Democratic rights or illegal squatting? Court holds first hearing on anti-nuclear tents

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201305240053>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear activists blasted the government at the Tokyo District Court on May 23 in the first hearing over the legality of protest tents set up on the grounds of the industry ministry.

The central government has sued the anti-nuclear protesters and demanded that the tents be removed, saying they are illegally squatting on state-owned land. The government also said the tents, facing a sidewalk and a crossing, are obstructing traffic and compromising the safety of pedestrians and motorists. The defendants, however, argued during the hearing that installing the tents to express their opinions is a legitimate exertion of their democratic rights.

“Our tents express nationwide anger,” one of the defendants, 70-year-old Taro Fuchigami, told the court on May 23. “Somebody else would have erected the tents if we had not done so.”

The two sides are so divided over the issue that legal experts expect the case will reach the Supreme Court.

If the district court sides with the government and includes a provision in its ruling allowing for an injunction to be carried out before the decision becomes final and binding, the government could seek the immediate removal of the tents.

However, the defendants would still have the right to request a suspension of that injunction.

“I initially expected all this would last for only about a week,” said a 66-year-old man who helped install the first tent, which has remained in place for 20 months now.

On Sept. 11, 2011, exactly six months after the Fukushima nuclear disaster was triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, protesters calling for an end to nuclear power in Japan formed a “human chain” around the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

The 66-year-old man’s group set up a tent to provide a base for the protesters, some of whom had traveled far to join the rallies, including women from Fukushima Prefecture who said the nuclear crisis had devastated their lives. Two more tents were pitched soon after.

In March 2012, weekly protests started outside the prime minister's office, a short walk from the tent site. The Friday night rallies reached a peak in the summer that year.

The man said his protest group initially rented the tents but later bought them.

"We owe what we are to the many encouragements and expectations we have received," the man said.

He said his group applied for a land use permit with the industry ministry, but the request was rejected.

Two activists who represented the group during the application procedure were named in the lawsuit filed by the government in March.

The decision to demand the removal of the tents came after the change of government in December.

"We have discussed taking legal measures, but have stopped short of making such a decision," Yukio Edano, who served as industry minister under the previous administration of the Democratic Party of Japan, told a news conference in December.

By contrast, Toshimitsu Motegi, Edano's successor, was hinting early on about taking a tough stand when he assumed the post under the new administration of the Liberal Democratic Party.

"The squatting poses a serious question," he said. "We are discussing how to deal with it."

Japanese artist 281_Anti Nuke's posters

May 28, 2013

281_Anti Nuke's anger at authority is at a critical mass

by Jon Mitchell

Special To The Japan Times

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2013/05/28/lifestyle/281_anti-nukes-anger-at-authority-is-at-a-critical-mass/#.UaOqlthBpg4

More than two years after the triple reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, hundreds of thousands of residents of the Tohoku region of northeastern Honshu remain displaced, the power station teeters on the brink of further disaster and large swaths of northern Japan are so irradiated they'll be uninhabitable for generations to come. But today in Tokyo, it is as though March 11, 2011, never happened. The streets are packed with tourists and banners herald the city's 2020 Olympic bid; the neon lights are back on and all memories of post-meltdown power savings seem long forgotten.

Given this apparent mood of collective amnesia, the large poster on a wall near Shibuya Station comes as a surprise. It shows a little girl wearing a long red dress stenciled with the words "3.11 is not over" — nearby another poster depicts a Rising Sun flag seeping blood and the message "Japan kills Japanese."

These posters — and dozens of others pasted around Tokyo — are the work of Japanese artist 281_Anti Nuke. While the origins of his chosen name are murky, the way in which his subversively simple images force passersby to stop — and think — has led to comparisons with British street artist Banksy. 281's designs have also made him a target for Japan's far right, who have branded him a dangerous criminal and urged the public to help put a stop to his activities.

This degree of controversy has forced 281 to wrap his true identity in a veil of secrecy, but after a convoluted series of negotiations, he finally agreed to his first newspaper interview. Throughout the

meeting in a Shibuya coffee shop, 281 wore a cotton face mask and dark glasses; a disguise which helped him blend in seamlessly among the capital's fashion-conscious hay-fever sufferers.

"On March 11, 2011, I was in Tokyo when the earthquake hit. I'd never experienced anything like that before. It felt like a bad dream," 281 explained in a soft-spoken voice belying the fury of his designs.

Like the other 13 million residents of Tokyo, he survived the initial quake unharmed, but the following weeks triggered a seismic shift in his political outlook: "Before March 2011, I'd never been involved in activism of any kind. I'd trusted the Japanese government. But then the cracks started appearing," he said.

First there were the revelations that the government had concealed the meltdowns, followed by news that they had hidden information regarding the dispersal of radiation. 281 came to the conclusion that there was very little natural about this disaster: It had occurred as a result of ties between the Japanese government and the nuclear power station's operators, Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) — both of which were now determined to keep the truth hidden from the public.

Three months after the meltdowns, 281's anger reached critical mass and he felt compelled to take action. Despite having no background in art, he decided that the best way to spread awareness was to take his message to the streets.

The first design he created was a three-eyed gas mask with two mouth pieces and the word "Pollution" written below it. The image satirized the logo of Tepco, which was as recognizable to most Japanese residents as the golden arches of McDonald's or the Nike swoosh. 281 printed the gas mask onto 20-cm-tall stickers then stuck them around central Tokyo — on abandoned buildings and construction-site barricades. He avoided private property, but had few qualms targeting the city's ubiquitous Tepco meter boxes and electric transformer units.

Over the following months, 281 put up hundreds more posters and stickers to remind the public what, he believed, the Japanese government and Tepco were conspiring to make people forget. His best-known image depicts a little girl wearing a poncho and rubber galoshes; beneath her feet is the message, "I hate rain," punctuated with a triple-triangle radiation mark.

Since he first designed the image in September 2011, it has been spotted the length and breadth of Japan, as well as in the United States and Europe. 281 understood the reason for its viral spread when he started to receive tweets to his account at @281_: "The messages came from parents all over Japan. They told me they could see their own children in those prints."

The same child in the "I hate rain" sticker features in other 281 designs. In one, she plays on a swing as radiation signs fall like snowflakes around her; in another, dressed in a swimsuit, she hugs an irradiated life-ring. Like all of 281's work, the power of these designs lies in their simplicity. The radiation expelled by the twin meltdowns has tainted all aspects of children's lives and cast doubts on the safety of everyday activities that used to be taken for granted.

The repeated image of the young girl raises the question of whether 281 has children of his own. Initially, he declined to answer; but after some gentle persuasion, he conceded he was a father. The girl of the stickers, however, is not based upon his own children.

281's desire to protect details of his family is understandable. Notwithstanding the questionable legality of posting his designs on public property, the risks were elevated in December 2012 when the tabloid, Tokyo Sports, ran an article condemning his work.

Sparkling the outcry was one of 281's posters depicting politician Shinzo Abe — then the leader of the opposition but today the prime minister — with a radiation-emblazoned bandana over his face and the message, "Don't Trust." The image was found by Tokyo Sports during national election season and the paper accused 281 of initiating a smear campaign.

The story set the Internet ablaze. On bulletin boards, Japan's rightists demanded 281's immediate arrest for interfering with the election. Such commentators seemed oblivious to 281's previous designs, which had been equally critical of Abe's rivals. One of his most scathing posters, for example, depicted then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and Tsunehisa Katsumata, the former president of Tepco, locking tongues in a deep French kiss.

Despite the violence intimated by some of the online commentators, 281 was keen to downplay the problem.

"Even if people hated the Abe poster, at least it created public debate. It went beyond just being a poster and made people think about the issue of politicians' roles in the nuclear disaster," he said.

Asked whether he worried about his own personal safety, 281 gave a quiet laugh, "The only protection I took was to buy myself a pair of sunglasses. I could begin to understand why Spiderman feels the need to wear a mask."

281 had meant the comment as a joke but there was more truth to the superhero comparison than this modest man would ever admit. Science fiction is full of stories in which radiation transforms the destinies of normal men. Following the catastrophic disaster at Fukushima, this mild-mannered father was forced to take the law into his own hands to protect the life of his child — and the lives of children all over the nation.

The analogy seemed justified by 281's next comment. "The meltdowns showed us that the Japanese government might not help us in the future. We need to save ourselves. Even after I die, it's important to look after the next generation — and the generation beyond that."

This sense of mission motivated 281's latest series of works, which target the three key problems he believes Japan currently faces: the ongoing nuclear crisis, the rise in militarization and the planned entry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership. One of his new designs depicts three images of Abe wrapped again in bandanas — the first has the same nuclear symbol that sparked last year's online outrage, the others, military camouflage and the American flag.

Inevitably, works such as these will plunge 281 into the limelight once more. In addition, some of his designs will move from the street to an art space in Tokyo for his first show next month. British filmmaker, Adrian Storey has also just completed a documentary about his work titled "281_Anti Nuke."

How this growing publicity will affect 281 on an artistic — not to mention personal level — remains to be seen. But before he pulled his hood over his head and slipped back into the anonymity of Shibuya's night-time bustle, he renewed his promise to help protect his children and his country.

"Japan is at a changing point in its history. I want this country to find a better path. If we don't give up, then I'm confident we'll succeed in changing it."

Very special thanks to Erina Suto, without whom this article would have been impossible. A trailer for Adrian Storey's documentary can be seen at vimeo.com/65038166. For more of 281_Anti Nuke's designs and details of his upcoming show, visit: www.281antinuke.com.

Call to action (reactor no.4)

May 30, 2013

Call to action to UN Secretary General to prevent catastrophic high-level radioactive waste fire at Fukushima Daiichi Unit 4

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/japan/2013/4/30/call-to-action-to-un-secretary-general-to-prevent-catastroph.html>

April 30, 2013

In July 2012, Enformable Nuclear News posted this photo, showing the significant change of appearance going on at Fukushima Daiichi Unit 4, when TEPCO began removing large debris, such as destroyed walls, from the Unit 4 reactor building, nearly 16 months after a hydrogen explosion severely damaged it. The yellow vessel is the visible portion of the primary radiological containment structure surrounding the reactor pressure vessel, which fortunately had been defueled and was not operational on March 11, 2011. In August 2012, that lid was removed. The crane in the foreground sits atop the surface of the high-level radioactive waste storage pool, shown in the photo covered by a metallic plate. In an open letter to the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, Japanese diplomat Akio Matsumura has renewed his warnings about the risk of a catastrophic fire in the high-level radioactive waste storage pool at Japan's ravaged Fukushima Daiichi Unit 4 atomic reactor (see photo, left).

What can *you* do?

Please take one or more of the following actions:

Contact Chairman Wyden's ENR Committee. Thank him for his courageous leadership on this issue, and urge him to renew his efforts to persuade the Obama administration to deploy the full resources of the U.S. government to prevent a catastrophe at Fukushima Daiichi Unit 4's high-level radioactive waste storage pool.

Contact the White House, Chairwoman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Allison Macfarlane, Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, Secretary of State John Kerry, and/or Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, urging them to support Chairman Wyden's call to action.

You can also contact your own U.S. Senators and U.S. Representative, and urge them to support Chairman Wyden's efforts. To phone your Members of Congress, you can get patched through via the Capitol Switchboard: (202) 224-3121.

Background: Last year, Matsumura, working with the likes of former Japanese Ambassador to Switzerland, Murata, brought this grave risk to the attention of not only the Japanese people, but the world. Matsumura also called upon the U.S. government to take meaningful action, as the Japanese government obviously will not.

It now appears very unlikely that Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) will meet its own previous deadline of late 2013 for restoring sufficient infrastructure at Unit 4 to support the weight of a crane needed to lift 100-ton irradiated nuclear fuel waste transfer casks from the pool, several stories up in the air, to the ground. As mentioned in Matsumura's letter to Ban Ki-moon, an ongoing crisis of radioactively contaminated groundwater is distracting TEPCO's attention from such other priorities at the devastated site.

Predictions are that a magnitude 7.0 earthquake is likely to strike in northeast Japan in the next few years. It is doubtful that the Unit 4 reactor building, so badly damaged by the explosion which hit it after the earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, could withstand such a large jolt. Its high-level radioactive waste storage pool still contains some 100-200 metric tons of irradiated nuclear fuel, which could catch fire if its cooling water supply is suddenly drained away (or more slowly boils away, as due to a long-term disruption to the electricity supply needed to power circulation pumps; shorter duration disruptions have been a recurring problem at the site).

Robert Alvarez of Institute for Policy Studies has calculated that the Unit 4 pool contains more than 10 times the hazardous radioactive Cesium-137 than was released during the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe. The Unit 4 pool has no radiological containment structure around it. In fact, it is open-air. Thus, any radiological releases would be directly into the environment, and would quickly dwarf what has already been released during the past two years of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear catastrophe.

The pool needs to be emptied of its irradiated nuclear fuel before such an unthinkable catastrophe unfolds. But how?

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), now Chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, donned a radiation protection suit and visited Fukushima Daiichi in April 2012. Upon his return, he urgently called upon the U.S. government to offer to the Japanese government the full resources at its disposal, to aid in the emptying of the Unit 4 high-level radioactive waste storage pool. But there was no response from the Obama administration.

Now that President Obama has won a second term, and has new leadership at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Energy, State Department, and Department of Defense, it is a good time to renew Sen. Wyden's April 2012 call.

Lastly, please consider making a tax deductible donation to support the vital work of Akio Matsumura.

Update on May 30, 2013 by admin



Tens of thousands anti-nukes in the streets of Tokyo

June 3, 2013

Anti-nuke protesters surround Diet building with Upper House election looming

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306030087

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear organizations turned out in force in major protests in Tokyo on June 2, looking to have an impact on the Upper House election in July and protest the planned restart of nuclear reactors.

A ring of protesters measuring about 1.2 kilometers surrounded the Diet building on the evening of June 2. Organizers said the protest drew about 85,000 people, while the Metropolitan Police Department had a vastly lower estimate of about 20,000.

Those estimates failed to match the hundreds of thousands who turned out last year shortly before the government approved the resumption of operations at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Kiyohachi Oda, 68, of Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture, who has been attending weekly Friday night protests around the prime minister's office in Tokyo from last summer, admitted the enthusiasm of the demonstrators had weakened.

"If no one shows up, that will be equivalent to approving of nuclear energy," he said. "It will be important to continue the protest even if there is only one participant."

Among the three groups that organized the protest on June 2 were the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which has been organizing the Friday night demonstrations in front of the prime minister's office, as well as Genpatsu wo Nakusu Zenkoku Renrakukai (National conference on abolishing nuclear power plants).

Two separate gatherings were held in Tokyo in the afternoon.

At one gathering in Shiba Park, Nobel Prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe was among those who spoke. Noted author Keiko Ochiai said, "It will be important to bring back to the Upper House election those people who chose not to vote in last December's Lower House election. If we can do that, the momentum will change. We have to do everything that we can."

The two gatherings then held protest marches and by evening had reached the Diet building. Lawmakers from opposition parties, such as the Democratic Party of Japan, the People's Life Party, the Japanese Communist Party, Green Wind and the Social Democratic Party, gave speeches criticizing a resumption of operations at nuclear plants, of which 48 of the nation's 50 reactors remain off line.

A number of those who took part were regulars, such as a 33-year-old woman who works out of a temp staff company in Tokyo. She has been participating in the anti-nuclear protests from May 2012, in part, because she felt that public opinion was leaning toward resignation about the eventual resumption of nuclear plant operations.

In June 2012, the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly rejected an ordinance calling for a referendum on whether nuclear plants should resume operations, which had been forced onto the agenda after a petition drive collected 320,000 signatures.

While that defeat led to a drop in participation in the protests, the woman did not become discouraged.

"It will take a tremendous effort to have nuclear power plants decommissioned," the woman said. "I feel public opinion will change gradually through not just protests, but a continuation of various activities, such as a review of wasteful use of electricity."

Aki Hashimoto, 57, from Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, was directly affected by the nuclear accident and could empathize with the concerns raised by a farmer in Tamura, Fukushima Prefecture.

"People who come here will understand the anger of Fukushima residents who have been made to suffer even while no one takes responsibility for the accident," Hashimoto said.

She has attended the protests while occasionally taking time off from her work at a cram school. The results of the December Lower House election were a shock because the Liberal Democratic Party, which has been passive about moving away from nuclear energy, won overwhelmingly even in Fukushima Prefecture.

Although Hashimoto's home is located more than 50 kilometers from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, radiation levels continue to be high. Her only daughter and newly born grandchild have evacuated to Fukuoka Prefecture in Kyushu.

"I am mortified by people who feel as though nothing has happened, even while there are residents who continue to be afraid of unseen damage," she said.

Protester Oda is also originally from Koriyama. Relatives who continue to live in the city have said that grandchildren who live in other prefectures have not visited since the 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. Oda's cousin has also stopped sending rice and apples grown in Fukushima.

"There are many tragedies arising from the nuclear plant," Oda said.

There were also some protesters who were relative newcomers to the event.

Sachiko Asami, 38, of Yokohama, who works as a medical care clerical worker, only began joining the protests from last week.

She voted for a candidate in the December Lower House election who supported a shift from nuclear energy, but that candidate lost. That told her how high the hurdles were in politics to affecting change.

However, her interest in the nuclear issue increased after she learned about radiation levels in her neighborhood through Facebook, which she joined late last year. She also read posts from those who took part in the anti-nuclear demonstrations and decided to participate herself.

While she shouted her opposition to a resumption of nuclear plant operations, she also felt frustration that the participation of so many people still could not influence politicians.

"Politicians are the ones who make the final decisions," she said. "That means that elections are important. I want to call on others to vote in the Upper House election."

A 33-year-old man from Tokyo's Ota Ward took part in the protest with his wife and two children. It was his first time participating in such a demonstration. He agreed with the argument made that today's generation had to take responsibility for the sake of future children.

The man works for an equipment manufacturer and supports the economic policies of the Abe Cabinet. However, he does not support resumption of operations at nuclear plants. He also takes offense at the LDP stance that it was not responsible for the nuclear accident since it was in the opposition when it occurred.

"Public opinion polls show many people want to move away from nuclear energy," the man said. "Politicians should listen sufficiently to public opinion."

Keiko Hoshina, 67, of Tokyo's Nerima Ward, first participated in the protests in April after she came to realize that she was trying to put the nuclear accident behind her.

Since last month, she has begun her own survey of 100 colleagues and friends. Her only question is, "Are you in favor of moving away from nuclear energy?"

She does not force her own opinion on others, but hopes that people will also begin thinking seriously about the issue. She has so far asked about 50 people.

(This article was written by Takayuki Kihara, Kaigo Narisawa and Takuro Yagi.)

Large anti-nuclear rally held near Diet building

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130603p2g00m0dm037000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- An anti-nuclear power rally Sunday near the Diet building in Tokyo drew 60,000 people, according to the three groups that organized the event, including one led by Nobel literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe.

The Metropolitan Police Department, which provided security for the event, said the number of participants was between 20,000 and 30,000.

The protesters marched to the Diet building after holding anti-nuclear rallies at a park in central Tokyo and a site near the Diet building earlier in the day.

"Resuming (operating) nuclear power plants is a betrayal to Fukushima," Oe said at the rally in Shiba park in Tokyo's Minato Ward, adding public opinion is strongly in favor of scrapping all of Japan's nuclear power plants.

The protest was organized by the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which has been holding weekly anti-nuclear rallies outside the prime minister's office since the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis, and a group of labor unions nationwide.

Also taking part was a group led by Oe and other celebrities which has organized an ongoing antinuclear campaign -- "10 Million People's Action to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants" -- since the 2011 crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukushima Prefecture.

Rallies held to oppose restart of nuclear plants

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130602_20.html

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets of Tokyo to oppose moves to bring the country's nuclear power stations back online.

Three groups organized rallies on Sunday. They say a total of 25,000 people attended.

At one of the rallies, Nobel Prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe said restarting nuclear plants is a betrayal of the people affected by the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in 2011.

Miyoko Watanabe, who used to run a farm near the plant, said she regrets believing the lie that nuclear plants are safe.

She voiced opposition to a government plan to export nuclear plant technologies. She said Japan should not take the wrong path by focusing too much on economic benefits.

The participants later marched near the Diet and the head office of Tokyo Electric Power Company, the operator of the Fukushima plant.

Sunday's rallies came as plant operators across Japan are preparing to apply to restart their reactors once the government introduces new safety guidelines in July.

Only one of Japan's nuclear plants is currently online.

The operators are working to ensure their plants meet the guidelines that require them to withstand severe accidents and natural disasters.

Naoto Kan lectures on nuclear power

June 5, 2013

Kan: Only nuclear-free society can avoid accidents

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130605_19.html

Japan's former prime minister Naoto Kan says the only way to completely avert nuclear accidents is to build a society that can do without nuclear power.

Kan made the comment on Tuesday **at a seminar in San Diego, California**. It was hosted by US citizens group opposed to nuclear power.

Kan explained to the audience the situation following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in March 2011. He was the prime minister when the earthquake and tsunami hit northeastern Japan and caused the nuclear accident.

Kan said that the worst case scenario at the time would have required the evacuation of some 50 million people from Tokyo and surrounding areas.

Kan called for building a global network to convey the dangers of nuclear power so that societies that do not depend on it can be created.

Former chairman of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission Gregory Jaczko also took part in the seminar. He said authorities in charge of nuclear plants should acknowledge that accidents do happen and should seriously consider the huge damage such accidents would cause.

Kan told NHK after the meeting that this was the first time he took part in an anti-nuclear power conference outside Japan.

He said will accept more offers from abroad to lecture on nuclear power and will work to end dependence on the energy source both at home and abroad.

Kan's mea culpa

June 6, 2013

Kan now sorry he pushed export of nuclear plant technology

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306060019

By ERIKA TOH/ Correspondent

SAN DIEGO--If he could turn the clock back, Naoto Kan says he would never have promoted the export of Japanese nuclear plant technology.

Kan, whose tenure as prime minister was defined by his handling of the March 2011 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters, professed embarrassment June 4 at having pushed the policy prior to the reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Kan, of the Democratic Party of Japan, made his comments at a gathering organized by a U.S. citizens group. The event was the first time Kan had spoken about the experience to an overseas audience.

"Before March 11, I asked nations to import the technology because I felt nuclear plants were safe," Kan said. "I am now embarrassed for having done so."

As prime minister, Kan was involved in efforts to export nuclear plant technology to India, Turkey and Vietnam.

"Before March 11, I was in favor of the safe usage of nuclear plants, but my thinking has changed 180 degrees after March 11," he said.

The government now led by the Liberal Democratic Party continues to push the export of nuclear plant technology as part of its economic growth strategy.

Kan said regarding that policy, "When we think about the future of those nations (targeted for the exports), the better option would be to introduce renewable energy sources."

Kan also revealed that he had received an invitation to speak in Taiwan where public opinion is split over a nuclear plant now under construction

Japan-India pact to jeopardise NPT

June 9, 2013

Nagasaki declaration to take swipe at nuclear pact with India

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306090043

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

NAGASAKI--The peace declaration to be delivered on the 68th anniversary of the atomic bombing of this city on Aug. 9 will oppose the signing of a pact enabling Japanese companies to export nuclear technology and reactors to India.

Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue said June 8 his declaration will criticize the Japan-India agreement to conclude a nuclear energy pact at an early date on the grounds that it jeopardizes the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

India, a nuclear power, is not an NPT signatory.

The Japan-India agreement was reached during a May 29 summit between Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh, in Tokyo.

The Abe administration is pushing exports of nuclear technology and reactors to potential customers such as energy-starved India. A bilateral nuclear energy agreement is a precondition for such exports.

At a meeting of Nagasaki's peace declaration drafting committee on June 8, one member said the declaration must absolutely oppose the concluding of a Japan-India nuclear energy agreement.

Another member said the government is not making serious efforts to put the brakes on nuclear proliferation.

Taue met with Masaji Matsuyama, a senior vice foreign minister, on June 3, and called for suspending negotiations on a nuclear energy pact with India.

The mayor said there are concerns that India may divert Japan's nuclear technology to nuclear weapons development.

Antinuke protests are "an important expression of political opinion"

June 9, 2013

Rally against nuclear power

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/06/09/editorials/rally-against-nuclear-power/#.UbQsq9hBpg4>

Thousands of protesters took to the streets last Sunday, rallying in Tokyo's Shiba and Meiji parks and marching to the Diet area to protest against nuclear power. The organizers of the rally claimed that 60,000 people ringed the Diet Building, though the Metropolitan Police Department put the number at 20,000 to 30,000.

Whatever the exact number, the rally was another expression of deep-seated opposition to nuclear power in Japan. The central government should recognize rallies like this as **an important expression of political opinion**.

Unfortunately the government appears not to be listening. Neither are they paying attention to the countless problems with the cleanup of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, whose meltdown is Japan's worst nuclear disaster.

The disaster has displaced some 150,000 people and left others living in fear of exposure to radiation. Every day, a new problem is announced by Tokyo Electric Power Co., whether it's rats eating electric lines or another tank leaking radioactive water. The proposed solutions, whether to expand the number of storage tanks or to make frozen walls in the soil to lessen leakage, show little progress and much desperation.

Power companies and the central government do not seem to be listening to scientists, either.

To take one example, the Nuclear Regulation Authority judged the fault running under reactor 2 at Japan Atomic Power Co.'s Tsuruga nuclear plant to be active and therefore extremely dangerous.

Objective data and scientific facts from geologists and specialists outside the nuclear power industry clearly point out the danger of operating nuclear power plants in earthquake-prone areas, which pretty much make up all of Japan.

Even former Prime Minister Naoto Kan, giving his first speech abroad since the 3/11 disasters, stated in California last week that the only way to contain the risk of nuclear accidents is to create a nuclear-free society.

After handling, or mishandling, the crisis in 2011 as prime minister, it is a healthy change for Mr. Kan to admit being ashamed of his previous role as an apologist for exporting Japanese nuclear technology to developing nations and to offer a reasonable evaluation of the issue. If only other former and current leaders would do the same, the issue might change for the better.

Instead, despite the clear public and scientific opinion against nuclear power, power companies and the central government continue to push for restarting the nuclear reactors whose operations were suspended after the 2011 nuclear disaster.

In the short run, safety procedures at power plants must be made more stringent and followed scrupulously. Energy-saving policies for individuals and businesses need to be developed and enforced. Alternatives to nuclear power plants that will not cause long-term environmental damage must be developed with sufficient funding from public and private sources.

Meanwhile, the cleanup at Fukushima No. 1 will continue for at least a lifetime, perhaps two.

Nuclear power plants cannot be sufficiently prepared to avoid all major disasters and the problems when disasters do strike have no good solution.

Clean up and decommission Fukushima if you want to cooperate

June 11, 2013

Cease promoting nuclear power

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/06/11/editorials/cease-promoting-nuclear-power/#.Uba_b9hBpg4

Meeting in Tokyo on June 7, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and French President Francois Hollande agreed to cooperate on the development of a nuclear fuel cycle and the export of nuclear power technology. Mr. Abe's decision to push forward with nuclear power technology is deplorable given the damage caused by the ongoing crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Mr. Abe and Mr. Hollande also agreed to launch talks between their countries' foreign and defense ministers on the joint development of defense equipment. This decision, which could lead to use of weapons jointly developed by Japan and France in military conflicts, shows that Mr. Abe has little respect for the Constitution's no-war principle.

Mr. Abe's decision to move forward with the development of nuclear power technology represents his cynical disregard for the victims of the Fukushima nuclear crisis. Some 150,000 Fukushima residents still cannot return home due to radioactive contamination and many others live in fear of exposure to radiation released by the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

In May, Mr. Abe signed agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Turkey to enable the export of Japanese nuclear technology to them. At a joint news conference with Mr. Hollande, he said, "Japan will respond to expectations about Japan's nuclear power technology from the viewpoint of enhancing the world's safety level (in nuclear power generation)." If the prime minister seriously considered the ramifications of the Fukushima disaster, he could not have made such a statement.

The timing of the prime minister's misguided plan could not have been worse. On June 7, Southern California Edison announced that it will permanently shutter two reactors built by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries at its San Onofre nuclear power station after discovering that their steam generators have dangerous defects that could cause a nuclear accident.

In an attempt to resurrect Japan's nuclear fuel cycle endeavor, Mr. Abe and Mr. Hollande have agreed to jointly develop a new type of fast reactor based on the same type of concept used in Japan's Monju reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, the core component of Japan's nuclear fuel cycle project. They also agreed to cooperate on starting "the safe and stable operation" of the spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, another important component of the project.

But the project, for which Japan has spent nearly ¥10 trillion, is almost bankrupt. The Monju reactor has been inoperative for most of the past 19 years while Rokkasho reprocessing plant's full operation has been postponed 19 times due to a series of problems. The Japan Atomic Energy Agency, the operator of Monju, failed to inspect nearly 10,000 reactor components in and after 2010, and the Nuclear Regulation Authority ordered the JAEA not to prepare to restart the trouble-plagued Monju until it improves its safety management.

Mr. Abe should stop promoting nuclear energy. Even if the Rokkasho plant becomes fully operative, the resulting plutonium production will increase the danger of nuclear proliferation. **If Japan and France wish to cooperate on nuclear energy, they should focus their efforts on cleaning up the areas contaminated by the Fukushima disaster and decommissioning the damaged reactors.**

Not everybody has given up on nuclear-free Japan

June 11, 2013

In age of Abe, local governments still fight for nuclear-free society

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306110012

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

OSAKA--Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his government have abandoned a nuclear-free policy, largely ignored anti-nuclear protests and are accelerating efforts to restart idled reactors.

But many local governments and groups have still not given up their drive to end the nation's dependence on nuclear energy.

They say the nation simply cannot risk another accident like the one that hit the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

For example, an energy strategy council jointly set up in February 2012 by the Osaka prefectural government and the Osaka city government compiled a final report on May 31 that concluded: "Japan can achieve a nuclear-free society by 2030."

That more or less matched Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto's appeal, "Let's make a proposal from Osaka to build a nuclear-free society."

The 10 experts on the council include Chairman Kazuhiro Ueda, professor of economics at Kyoto University; Kenichi Oshima, professor of economics at Ritsumeikan University; and Hiroshi Takahashi, senior researcher at Fujitsu Research Institute.

The final report provided a road map that reflected Kansai Electric Power Co.'s enormous difficulties in supplying electricity to customers after the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami caused the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

All reactors in the country were shut down for safety reasons following the Fukushima accident. Kansai Electric, based in Osaka, had depended on nuclear power generation for more than 50 percent of its electricity supply, and thus the Kansai region faced the most serious electricity shortage among all regions in Japan.

There were also concerns that an accident at one of the many nuclear reactors in Fukui Prefecture could contaminate Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture, which serves as a water source for many areas in the Kansai region.

“The weakness of the electricity supply system centering on nuclear power generation became clear,” the Osaka council’s report said.

It also said that “nuclear power generation does not have an economic advantage” over other power generating methods, citing the procedures to secure land for a nuclear plant and the enormous costs for construction or possible clean-up work following an accident.

Saying it is “reasonable” to achieve a nuclear-free society by 2030, the report mapped out measures that should be taken through fiscal 2017.

The main pillar is “reforming the electricity supply system” earlier than the central government’s schedule to increase the use of renewable energies, such as solar power and wind power.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry plans to separate the electricity transmission division from electric power companies from 2018 to 2020.

However, the report urged the central government to implement the separation within two years from now. It also called on the central government to completely liberalize the electricity retailing business to allow the entry of other power companies.

“It is impossible to reform the electricity supply system in two years,” a ministry official said. “If the proposal is not realistic, it is just a pie in the sky.”

The Osaka report also acknowledged that the idled nuclear reactors would be restarted, but it attached conditions.

“The central government should thoroughly study safety regulations around the world,” the report said. “It will take at least three years (until a restart).”

The report also said that the central government should stop giving grants to local governments that host nuclear plants, and called for changes to industrial structures in some areas that depend too heavily on nuclear power plants.

It also requested the enactment of a law to promote the decommissioning of nuclear reactors.

In the background of the report was dissatisfaction with the way Kansai Electric raised electricity rates earlier this year.

“It is unreasonable to raise electricity charges unilaterally when consumers cannot choose their electric power companies,” Osaka Governor Ichiro Matsui said.

The governor said he will work out the “Osaka Power Denryoku Koso” (Osaka power electricity plan) within this year to establish a power generation organization that can rival Kansai Electric.

He will also demand the central government adopt contents of the report.

The Fukushima prefectural government is also pushing for a nuclear-free society by demanding the central government decommission all 10 nuclear reactors in the prefecture.

About 160,000 residents of the prefecture are still living as evacuees due to the Fukushima nuclear accident.

The neighboring prefecture of Yamagata also advocated a move away from nuclear power generation and a promotion of renewables in its energy strategy compiled in March 2012.

The Shiga and Kyoto prefectural governments have also compiled plans to shift away from nuclear power. Shiga Governor Yukiko Kada is known for advocating a “graduation from nuclear power generation.”

In April 2012, local government leaders looking to phase out nuclear power generation set up a council that now has 68 local leaders as members, including Tatsuya Murakami, chief of Tokai village in Ibaraki Prefecture that hosts the Tokai No. 2 nuclear plant of Japan Atomic Power Co.

But Abe and his ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which nullified the previous administration’s goal of “achieving a nuclear-free society by the end of the 2030s,” are moving in the opposite direction. They plan to speed up the process of restarting reactors approved by the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

(This article was written by Ryuta Sometaya, Nahoko Kyotani and Yuriko Suzuki.)

Japanese and nukes

June 10, 2013

ASAHI POLL: 59% oppose Abe's nuclear power policy

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306100070

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Nearly 60 percent of voters oppose Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's plan to use nuclear energy to fuel economic growth, but 51 percent expect his policies to improve the economy, an Asahi Shimbun survey showed.

Abe on June 5 announced the latest measures of the "third arrow" in his growth strategy, which include the use of nuclear power generation and resuming operations at now-idle reactors that are deemed safe. But the nationwide telephone survey, conducted by The Asahi Shimbun on June 8-9, showed that many Japanese remain averse to the use of nuclear power more than two years after the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

The survey received 1,781 valid responses, or 52 percent of those contacted, and did not include some parts of Fukushima Prefecture.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents said they are against the government's use of nuclear plants for economic growth, compared with 27 percent in favor.

Fifty-eight percent also said they are opposed to restarting reactors, while 28 percent said they support a resumption of reactor operations.

Still, many Japanese have high expectations for Abe's economic recovery efforts.

More than half, or 51 percent, said they expect Abe's economic policies will help the economy grow, compared with 33 percent who doubt the effectiveness of his plan.

But only 36 percent believe Abe's economic policies will lead to wage increases and expanded employment, while 45 percent do not expect improvements in these areas, according to the survey.

Moreover, 78 percent said they do not feel the economy has recovered since Abe became prime minister in December last year, compared with just 18 percent who said they feel the economy has improved.

The first two "arrows" of Abe's economic policies known as "Abenomics" were eased monetary policies and increased government spending.

The support rate for the Abe Cabinet dropped from 65 percent in the previous survey in May, but remained relatively high at 59 percent, which puts the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in solid position ahead of the Upper House election in July. The nonsupport rate inched up to 20 percent from 18 percent.

If the Upper House election were held now, 45 percent of voters would pick Abe's LDP in the proportional representation portion, according to the survey.

No other party received double-digit support in this category of the survey.

Seven percent picked the Democratic Party of Japan, 6 percent chose Your Party, 5 percent backed the Japan Restoration Party, and 4 percent said they would vote for the Japanese Communist Party.

Five percent picked ruling coalition partner New Komeito.

Fifty-one percent of all respondents said they would like to see the LDP-New Komeito coalition win a majority of Upper House seats after the July election, while 34 percent said they do not want this to happen.

Seventy-one percent said they hope to see a party large enough to challenge the LDP, compared with 21 percent who said otherwise.

Abes' private opposition party

June 12, 2013

Nuclear advocacy lands Abe in hot water with wife

by Kanako Takahara

Staff Writer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/12/national/nuclear-advocacy-lands-abe-in-hot-water-with-wife/>

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe may be pushing to sell Japan's atomic plants abroad, but his wife, Akie, doesn't seem to be on the same page, saying her "heart aches" to see him being pronuclear.

"I'm opposed to nuclear power," she said in a June 6 speech in Tokyo. "My heart aches to see him selling nuclear power overseas."

Her comment came a day before her husband and French President Francois Hollande agreed to cooperate on developing and exporting nuclear power technologies.

"I think it's an important technology," she said. "But it'll be better if Japan can use part of the money used for nuclear power to develop new energy and sell Japan-made clean energy . . . overseas."

An ex-radio DJ, Akie Abe said she will say out loud what her hubby may not want to hear. "I'm the opposition party at home. But I try to say it euphemistically so as not to hurt him."

On when Abe quit as prime minister in 2007, she said she couldn't go out to face public critics.

June 11, 2013

Abe's wife casts doubts on nuclear plant exports

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306110090

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe does not have to look far to find an opponent to his policy of exporting nuclear plants as a pillar of Japan's economic growth strategy.

"I am opposed to nuclear power, and my heart aches," Akie Abe, the prime minister's wife, said on June 6, questioning her husband's efforts to export nuclear plants.

Akie made the comment in a speech hosted by Furusato TV, a nonprofit organization working to revitalize regional economies. She is an adviser to Furusato TV.

According to a video posted on the group's website, Akie said nuclear power is an important technology that Japan excels in but proposed exporting renewable energy instead.

"It will be better to use part of the money spent on nuclear plants for the development of new energy and promote the sale of Japanese-born clean energy overseas," she said.

Akie described herself as "an opposition party within the family."

"When (the prime minister) gains power, it gradually becomes difficult for those around him to tell him what he does not want to be told," she said. "He had better hear something he does not want to hear."

Abe has been accelerating negotiations to conclude a nuclear energy agreement, a precondition for exports of nuclear plants, with India and Middle Eastern countries.

Japanese and nuke technology export

June 16, 2013

Almost 60% of public opposes Japan's export of nuclear tech: survey

Jiji

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/16/national/almost-60-of-public-opposes-japans-export-of-nuclear-tech-survey/#.UbySrthBpg4>

Nearly 60 percent of the public oppose the government's move to promote the export of Japan's nuclear technologies and expertise, a new opinion poll has revealed.

Some 58.3 percent of respondents disapproved of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's nuclear export policy, against 24.0 percent who declared themselves in favor, according to the survey conducted by Jiji Press.

At a meeting in Tokyo on June 7, Abe agreed with French President Francois Hollande to cooperate in expanding sales of nuclear power plant equipment and technologies to other countries.

But the survey found that concerns about the safety of atomic energy remain strong among the public, more than two years after the March 2011 meltdowns struck the Fukushima No. 1 power station.

Even among supporters of Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, those opposed to the policy exceeded those who backed it by 43.2 percent to 40.4 percent, the findings showed.

Among backers of the Democratic Party of Japan, the largest opposition force in the Diet, 76.1 percent said they are against the move by Abe's government. And 50.0 percent of supporters of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) said they opposed the policy, exceeding the 45.5 percent who backed it.

The four-day survey was conducted through Monday on 2,000 adults nationwide and received 1,304 valid responses.

Kan: Abe's nuke export policy "inhumane"

June 17, 2013

Kan hits Abe's nuclear salesmanship

by Tomohiro Osaki

Staff Writer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/06/17/national/kan-hits-abes-nuclear-salesmanship/#.Ub8U-NhBpg4>

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is engaging in "inhumane" activity as an aggressive "salesman for Japan's nuclear village" by peddling the power technology overseas, Naoto Kan, who was in charge of the nation during the mega-earthquake, tsunami and nuclear calamity in March 2011, blogged Monday.

Kan has been canvassing areas in Tokyo to draw support for the candidates running on the Democratic Party of Japan ticket for the June 23 Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly poll.

In his blog, Kan said he has been stressing the importance of ridding Japan of its nuclear dependence, appealing to Tokyo residents to keep in mind that the 2011 core meltdowns in Fukushima almost resulted in the capital having to be evacuated.

"I have been explaining that this means people in Tokyo were indeed involved in that accident. And they're obliged to decide whether to abolish nuclear power," he blogged.

Noting Abe is from Yamaguchi Prefecture, Kan also criticized him for turning a blind eye to the strong opposition by a majority of the public there to the planned Kaminoseki nuclear power plant.

No more nukes, say TEPCO shareholders

June 26, 2013

TEPCO shareholders want out of nuclear power

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130626_15.html

A group of shareholders at Tokyo Electric Power Company is demanding the utility withdraw from the business of nuclear power generation. TEPCO operates the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Shareholders gathered in Tokyo on Wednesday. It was their first annual meeting since the utility was effectively placed under government control.

TEPCO Chairman Kazuhiko Shimokobe apologized to shareholders for continuing to cause concern and inconvenience more than 2 years after the nuclear disaster.

The utility has been slow to clean up the Fukushima Daiichi plant and continues to report leaks of radiation-contaminated water.

TEPCO President Naomi Hirose asked shareholders to support the firm's plan to restart its nuclear reactors. He said management will quickly improve safety and strengthen operations.

The shareholders' group is demanding the firm decommission all of its nuclear reactors. They also want more detailed disclosure of information, and cuts in remuneration to board members.

One shareholder said decommissioning the reactors would be a way for TEPCO to compensate survivors of the nuclear disaster.

Antinuke shareholders want their voices to be heard

June 27, 2013

June 27, 2013

Anti-nuke shareholders state their case at power company meetings

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201306270014>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Still suffering 27 months after the meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, evacuees from Fukushima Prefecture made sure their voices were heard loud and clear at shareholders' meetings held by nine regional electric power companies on June 26.

"To what extent do you even think about the evacuees?" Ryuko Tachibana, 73, asked company management of Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 plant, at its shareholders' meeting at the Yoyogi National Stadium 1st Gymnasium.

She took part in the shareholders' meeting for the first time after being asked to join the group demanding that TEPCO get out of nuclear power generation. It took her more than three hours to reach the Yoyogi gym from her temporary housing in Motomiya, Fukushima Prefecture.

Tachibana's home was in Namie, also in the prefecture, about 10 kilometers from the Fukushima No. 1 plant.

She fled her home from March 12, 2011, the day after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. However, her evacuation course coincided with the direction in which radioactive materials spread from the plant. Not realizing the danger she faced, Tachibana moved to various community centers and gymnasiums that were set up as evacuation centers.

The nuclear accident was not the catalyst for her anti-nuclear stance. She did not change the opposition to the nuclear plant she had even from the beginning as others in the community looked coldly at her for being opposed to the construction of the facility near Namie.

"The wealth in terms of money and products that is generated by nuclear power is a false wealth," Tachibana said. "It is not something that should be left for the future of our children."

She taught English in junior high school until retirement. At one time, Tachibana taught at the junior high school in Futaba, where the Fukushima No. 1 plant is located.

As she was evacuating after the nuclear accident, Tachibana was struck by painful memories from her childhood. She was born in Dalian, China, where her parents had moved to during World War II.

She and her family were forced to return to Japan after the nation's defeat in the war, and the fear and concerns she felt as a child have remained with her throughout her life.

"The nation will not protect the people," she said. "The same thing will happen again as long as there are nuclear plants."

With so much time having passed since the accident, and evacuees having grown accustomed to life in temporary quarters, Tachibana feels that people's interest in the issue has weakened.

As she explained the anti-nuclear proposal at the meeting, she also had a feeling of wanting the public to pay attention.

"Displaying a stance of making every effort as a company to bring about a society with no fear of radiation will be one way of atoning to the evacuees who have suffered deep psychological pain," she said.

Meanwhile, other anti-nuclear activists stood outside of the venues for other major electric power companies shareholders' meetings to hand out fliers stating their position.

Yui Kimura, an official with the Nuclear Phase-Out TEPCO Shareholder's Movement, used a handheld mike to call out to the shareholders as they were heading for the meeting.

"A company that has received public funds should be more open to the public," she said. "I hope you will fulfill your social responsibility today."

Another former Fukushima Prefecture resident also tried to remind shareholders of what evacuees have been forced to endure.

Kyoichi Watanabe moved to Sapporo after the Fukushima nuclear accident and now heads a group that is calling on Hokkaido Electric Power Co. to quit nuclear power.

Hokkaido Electric is one of four companies planning to apply to the Nuclear Regulation Authority to restart their nuclear reactors after new safety standards go into effect July 8.

Currently, 48 of the nation's 50 nuclear reactors remain offline after concerns rose following the triple meltdown at the Fukushima plant.

While Watanabe's group submitted a proposal at the shareholders' meeting on June 26, it was voted down.

"I know from personal experience what is now happening in Fukushima," he said. "I feel (the Fukushima accident) has only now just begun, rather than having ended. I will continue with this activity."

(This article was compiled from reports by Takayuki Kihara and Yoichi Tsunashima.)

Protesters greet arrival of MOX shipment

June 28, 2013

Fight the power: Protesters demonstrate Thursday in Takahama, Fukui Prefecture, during the arrival of a vessel loaded with MOX fuel from France. | ERIC JOHNSTON

First MOX shipment since 3/11 arrives in Fukui

by Eric Johnston
Staff Writer

TAKAHAMA, FUKUI PREF. – Japan's first shipment of mixed uranium-plutonium oxide (MOX) fuel since the Fukushima nuclear crisis broke out on March, 11, 2011, arrived early Thursday at the Sea of Japan port of Takahama, Fukui Prefecture.

But the fuel, which took more than two months to get here from France and is intended to be used in reactor 3 of Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama nuclear plant, is likely to sit in storage for a while.

The central government has yet to approve either the restart of reactors 3 and 4, which Kepco will seek after new safety standards go into effect next month, or the use of the MOX fuel in reactor 3.

Questions over both the necessity of the fuel and what new safety standards the Nuclear Regulatory Authority might impose on the use of MOX remain unanswered.

The U.K.-registered Pacific Egret entered Takahama on Thursday morning to deliver the cargo. Kepco disclosed that 20 MOX fuel assemblies ordered from the French firm Areva SA were shipped.

The fuel was originally ordered in 2010 and was scheduled to have been delivered by summer 2011 but was put on hold after the Fukushima meltdowns.

Dozens of protesters from around Japan greeted the ship's arrival.

"Kepco does not have permission to restart the Takahama plant," said Aileen Mioko Smith of the Kyoto-based group Green Action. "On top of that, there is no post-Fukushima accident regulatory standard for MOX fuel."

After the ship's arrival, anti-nuclear groups presented petitions to Kepco officials, questioning the economic logic of importing MOX when it still had not obtained formal permission to burn it.

"For the utilities, the costs of manufacturing, transporting, burning, and then disposing spent MOX fuel are many times greater than the costs of using conventional uranium. In the extreme economic conditions of recent years, we question this method at a time when we're told electricity costs will rise," a petition addressed to Kepco from four major Japanese anti-nuclear groups stated.

Kepco said it will apply for the restart of the Mihama reactors 3 and 4 in July, as well as the later restart of reactors 3 and 4 at its atomic plant in Oi, Fukui Prefecture. Those two units, the only reactors currently online in Japan, have to shut down for inspections in the coming months.

After applying for state permission to restart the reactors, Kepco will seek final approval from Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa.

While fundamentally pro-nuclear, Nishikawa indicated earlier this month that applying to restart the reactors and loading unit 3 with MOX are separate issues.

MOX fuel processed in France arrives at Takahama nuclear plant

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130627p2g00m0dm044000c.html>

TSURUGA, Japan (Kyodo) -- A freighter carrying nuclear fuel processed in France arrived amid protests by antinuclear activists at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama nuclear power plant in central Japan on Thursday, the first such shipment to Japan since the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The shipment of uranium-plutonium mixed-oxide, or MOX, for the No. 3 reactor had been suspended due to the disaster at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi power plant following the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The Osaka-based utility hopes to use the fuel from around the fall of 2014, and is poised to apply for government approval to restart reactors Nos. 3 and 4 at the plant in Fukui Prefecture on the Sea of Japan once new nuclear plant safety requirements come into force in July.

More than 100 members of various antinuclear citizens groups rallied at a square near the plant and in front of the plant's gate, opposing the use of the fuel at the plant and urging the freighter to return to France.

At the rally, Toshihiro Inoue, 55, read a statement of protest against the installation of the fuel and handed it to a Kansai Electric official, while Hitomi Nishimoto, 46, told reporters that Kansai Electric should never use the delivered fuel at the plant.

The work to unload the MOX fuel rods from the freighter and store them at the plant is expected to finish by Thursday evening after local government officials have checked the levels of radiation.

Kansai Electric asked French nuclear firm Areva SA in 2008 to process 20 MOX fuel rods from spent nuclear fuel. The reprocessing work was completed in 2010 and the rods were initially meant to be shipped to Japan in 2011.

The freighter left France on April 17 for Japan by way of the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Kansai Electric has yet to disclose how many fuel rods were delivered.

Under the government's nuclear cycle policy, Kansai Electric used MOX fuel at the Takahama No. 3 reactor in so-called pluthermal, or plutonium-thermal, power generation from December 2010 through February 2012, when it was shut down for regular checks.

Kansai Electric, which supplies electric power to the Kansai region in western Japan and parts of central Japan, took delivery of four MOX fuel rods for use at the No. 4 reactor before the 2011 disaster.

Of the 50 commercial reactors in Japan, only two at Kansai Electric's Oi plant, also in Fukui, are now online.

The utility has officially said it will use MOX fuel sometime between 2013 and 2015, but included a plan to use it at the two Takahama reactors from around the fall of 2014 in its earlier application for government permission to raise household electricity rates.

Your Party against nukes

Your Party stands against tax hike, nuclear plants

by Reiji Yoshida

Staff Writer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/03/national/your-party-stands-against-tax-hike-nuclear-plants/#.UdURIdhSb9k>

Your Party will stress its call to freeze the upcoming consumption tax hike and **promise to abolish all nuclear power** plants by 2030 when the campaign for the Upper House officially starts Thursday, party leader Yoshimi Watanabe said.

"We'd like to say to voters, 'please don't lose hope in politics,' " Watanabe told The Japan Times and other media outlets during a joint interview Wednesday. "If they give up, the Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito will win a big victory."

With the support rate for the LDP-New Komeito alliance remaining consistently high, according to public opinion polls, observers are predicting a big victory for the ruling camp in the July 21 election.

Your Party is the fourth-largest force in the Upper House, holding 13 seats. Three of them will be contested in this election as half of the 242-seat chamber is up for grabs. The party as of Tuesday had 30 candidates.

“The possibility is very high that if the LDP-New Komeito bloc wins big, they will go back to their old politics, which is to benefit industry groups” that support and fund their campaigns, Watanabe said.

The ultimate goal for Your Party in this election is, together with other opposition parties, to prevent the LDP-New Komeito camp from winning a majority in the Upper House, he said.

The LDP has advocated revising the postwar Constitution, starting with watering down Article 96 to make it easier to make other amendments down the road.

The article as it now stands requires that constitutional changes win the approval of two-thirds of each Diet chamber before voters make the final decision in a national referendum.

Watanabe said there are other issues that should take priority over constitutional revision, such as measures to thoroughly correct the vote-value disparities between rural and urban areas and drastic reform of the central bureaucracy.

“We ourselves won’t try to make constitutional revision an issue for the election,” he said.

Having said that, Your Party has called for constitutional revision regarding administrative reform, such as consolidating the Diet into a single chamber and electing prime ministers through a direct general election.

Asked about the possibility of his party merging with Nippo Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) after the election, Watanabe flatly ruled it out.

“I have felt differences in such things as culture and viewpoints of history,” Watanabe said.

Nippon Ishin proposed a merger last October with Your Party, but the two parties eventually failed to reach an agreement.

Watanabe also pointed out that the Democratic Party of Japan was formed with members from various parties, such as the LDP, Social Democratic Party and Japan New Party, and many members eventually bolted after almost constant internal struggles.

"We have to learn lessons from the DPJ," Watanabe said.

Niigata governor Izumida: TEPCO cannot be trusted

July 3, 2013

Niigata governor opposes nuke plant restarts, criticizes TEPCO

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201307030055>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The governor of Niigata Prefecture lashed out at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s decision to apply for the restarts of two nuclear reactors, stating that the utility, operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, cannot be trusted.

"There is no greater disregard for local people than this," Governor Hirohiko Izumida told reporters on July 2 at the prefectural government office about TEPCO's intent to restart two reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture. "It is an act to completely destroy a relationship of trust."

Izumida criticized TEPCO for determining a course of action without providing an explanation to local governments and communities.

"Who could trust such a company?" the governor said.

At a July 2 board meeting, TEPCO decided to apply for permission to restart the No. 6 and No. 7 reactors as soon as possible after new safety requirements, approved by the Nuclear Regulation Authority, take effect on July 8.

TEPCO President Naomi Hirose plans to meet with Izumida and other local government leaders to gain their support in the near future, but Izumida said he has no intention of discussing the restarts of idle reactors.

TEPCO is legally allowed to apply to restart reactors, even if local governments disagree with the resumption, so at issue is whether the utility will submit applications despite opposition from local officials and residents.

Izumida has been a critic of TEPCO's handling of the accident at its Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, which was triggered by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

He has demanded before restarting reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant that TEPCO must “finish investigating the nuclear accident at the Fukushima No. 1 plant, as well as sum up the results of the investigation.”

Strong concerns from local residents about the restarts underlie the governor's strong stance.

A telephone survey conducted by The Asahi Shimbun in October last year showed that 51 percent of residents in the prefecture oppose the resumption of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant, compared with 27 percent in favor.

However, TEPCO said it is necessary to restart idle reactors as soon as possible to prevent a further increase in electricity rates.

“It will be impossible for our business to turn a profit (if we cannot restart the reactors),” Hirose said at a news conference on July 2.

He added the company will also make preparations to restart the No. 1 reactor at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant, where all seven reactors have remained offline after the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The reason why TEPCO plans to resume operations first at the No. 6 and No. 7 reactors is because both are relatively new advanced boiling water reactors.

The utility expects that the NRA will screen the applications for both reactors simultaneously, and it will be able to resume operations at the two reactors at the same time.

In addition, the output of the two reactors is 1.356 gigawatts each, compared to 1.1 gigawatts each for the five additional reactors at the plant.

Since the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 plant, TEPCO has posted huge annual losses for two consecutive fiscal years.

Because creditor banks may stop providing loans if the utility reports a loss once again for this fiscal year, TEPCO plans to return to the black this fiscal year by restarting the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant.

According to its rehabilitation plan, TEPCO planned to resume operations at reactors at the plant in phases from April.

Hokkaido Electric Power Co., Kansai Electric Power Co., Shikoku Electric Power Co. and Kyushu Electric Power Co. also plan to submit applications for restarts for a total of 12 reactors as early as July 8.

Taking into account that the NRA needs about six months to screen an application, TEPCO decided to apply for permission now after concluding that it will not be able to restart the reactors for several years if it does not submit applications together with the four other utilities.

(This article was compiled from reports by Takashi Ebuchi, Soshi Katsumi, Takayuki Kakuno and Kohei Tomida.)

Niigata governor blasts TEPCO for applying for screening to reactivate nuclear plant

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130703p2a00m0na012000c.html>

NIIGATA -- Gov. Hirohiko Izumida has bitterly criticized Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) for suggesting that it will apply for a safety inspection of its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant in the prefecture in a bid to reactivate the idled power station.

"It's an act that could destroy the company's mutual trust with local governments," Izumida said. "TEPCO's plan to file an application even without fulfilling its responsibilities will never gain the understanding of the public. The utility has failed to provide any explanation to the local community."

The governor has repeatedly said he has no intention of even discussing the possibility of resuming operations at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant unless the power company gets to the bottom of the accident at the tsunami-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant.

The mayors of Kashiwazaki and Kariwa have failed to make clear-cut statements on the matter.

"We'll make judgment after listening to an explanation from TEPCO," said Kashizawaki Mayor Hiroshi Aida, while saying, "I'm surprised at it (TEPCO's announcement) because it came all of a sudden."

"The village government is in no position to comment on an application because it is something that TEPCO's management decided. As mayor, I'd like to actively express opinions about the plant's safety while carefully listening to an explanation," Kariwa Mayor Hiroo Shinada said.

A leader of a citizens group that has been demanding a local referendum on the pros and cons of reactivating the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa power station urged the Niigata governor to place top priority on safety in making a decision on the matter.

"TEPCO is desperate to reactivate the plant in order to meet its managerial requirements. We'd like Gov. Izumida to make judgment while giving priority to the safety of prefectural residents," said Keiko Hashimoto, co-leader of the group.

Kazumasa Takeuchi, chairman of the Kashiwazaki Junior Chamber's panel on environmental and energy issues who is promoting the use of nuclear energy, urged that the plant be reactivated at an early date. "We hope that operations at the plant will be resumed as soon as possible while ensuring safety."

However, there is no prospect that TEPCO will gain consent from the local governments and communities hosting the nuclear plant, which is a prerequisite for reactivation, and the utility has not clarified when it will file its application.

July 03, 2013(Mainichi Japan)

Niigata mayor criticises TEPCO

July 5, 2013

Host mayor blasts Tepco over reactor restart announcement

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/05/national/host-mayor-blasts-tepco-over-reactor-restart-announcement/#.UdZ2HKxSb9k>

KASHIWAZAKI, NIIGATA PREF. – Hiroshi Aida, mayor of the city that hosts the biggest nuclear power plant in the world, had some harsh criticism for Tepco on Friday for announcing it will apply for a government safety assessment of two reactors before informing local authorities.

Aida made the remark during a meeting with Tokyo Electric Power Co. President Naomi Hirose, who came to Kashiwazaki, Niigata Prefecture, to try to win “understanding” for the restart plan.

The meeting was arranged after local leaders expressed discontent over Tepco’s move.

“It is very unfortunate that (Tepco) decided to apply (for the safety assessment) without any explanation,” Aida said. “It may damage the trusting relationship.”

It is the first time high-level Tepco executives have met with Niigata leaders over the resumption of reactors since the Fukushima catastrophe broke out in March 2011.

Hirose was expected to also meet with Hiroo Shinada, mayor of the village of Kariwa, and Niigawa Gov. Hirohiko Izumida later in the day.

Tepco wants to reactivate reactors 6 and 7 at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa complex to reduce its spending on costly fuel for thermal power generation.

Tepco has three nuclear plants, but the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa complex — the world’s largest with a combined output capacity of 8.2 million kilowatts — is the only one that wasn’t directly affected by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

When new nuclear regulations take effect on Monday, the Nuclear Regulation Authority will start accepting applications to conduct safety assessments. Passing the assessment will be a requirement for restarting reactors. All but two of Japan’s commercial units are offline due to safety concerns in the wake of Fukushima.

Izumida, the Niigata governor, has already reacted coldly to Tepco’s plan to apply for assessments.

“We have not heard any explanations,” he complained. “There is no greater disregard of local people than this.”

On Thursday, Izumida called on Tepco not to move ahead to install a key safety system without securing the approval of the prefectural government.

The safety system involves fitting reactor systems with vents and filters that can reduce the amount of radioactive substances emitted when pressure needs to be released during an emergency. Plant operators are obliged to install the equipment under the new nuclear regulations.

Izumida also requested detailed explanations on the venting operations that took place during the crisis at Fukushima No. 1. The reactors there had venting systems but not with radiation-screening filters.

“Even if radioactive substances will be reduced, it is still equipment that releases (radioactive material) outside,” Izumida said in a document addressed to Hirose.

Under the current legal framework, utilities can restart their reactors once the NRA confirms their safety. But the central government has acknowledged that local approval is important to bring reactors back online.

NRA Chairman Shunichi Tanaka told a news conference Thursday that he doesn’t think restarting the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa reactors will be easy, given Izumida’s stance.

But Tanaka declared that the safety assessments will be carried out “as swiftly as possible from a scientific and technological viewpoint, without taking into account such external conditions.”

People protest against nukes

July 8, 2013

Civic groups protest against restarting nuclear reactors



Protesters chant slogans against restarts of nuclear reactors in front of a building that houses the Nuclear Regulation Authority in Tokyo's Minato Ward on July 8. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130708p2a00m0na011000c.html>

About 80 members of civic groups chanted anti-nuclear slogans in front of a building housing the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) in Tokyo's Roppongi district on July 8, urging four electric power companies not to apply for permission to restart idled nuclear reactors.

"No to restarts," "Stop Oi (nuclear power plant)," the demonstrators chanted as new nuclear standards set by the NRA went into effect, leading Hokkaido, Kansai, Shikoku and Kyushu electric power companies to file applications to bring back online a total of 10 reactors at five nuclear power plants.

Kyoko Ono, 61, of an anti-nuclear group in Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture, shouted through a microphone that Shikoku Electric Power Co. should stop applying for permission to restart the No. 3 reactor of the Ikata Nuclear Power Plant because one of the world's largest active faults lies in front of the Ikata nuclear station. She also called on the utility firm to protect hometowns.

Makoto Yanagida, 73, co-leader of a group against restarting nuclear reactors, said in a speech that his Saikadososhinet group is protesting the new nuclear standards because the cause of the Fukushima nuclear disaster is still unknown.

The protesters delivered to a public relations official of the NRA a protest statement which said the new standards are intended to justify the restart of nuclear reactors rather than protect the safety of local residents around nuclear power plants.

Meanwhile, governors of prefectures where nuclear power plants are located commented on the new standards in Matsuyama, where they were attending a meeting of prefectural governors.

Fukui Gov. Kazumi (Issei) Nishikawa hailed the new standards, saying they contain what his prefecture had demanded. He urged the NRA to speedily discuss applications according to the new standards.

Protesters oppose nuclear reactor restarts

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130708_23.html

Protesters opposed to restarting Japan's nuclear reactors are gathered outside the office of the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

More than 60 members of the anti-nuclear group rallied in Tokyo after new regulations went into effect on Monday.

Utilities that meet the new requirements will be able to restart reactors that have been offline since the 2011 nuclear accident in Fukushima.

Demonstrators held up signs and chanted 'No' to restarting the reactors. They demanded a repeal of the new regulations.

Protesters came from the communities hosting the 4 utilities seeking approval to restart some reactors. They said the power companies have not put in place key safety measures. They said these include erecting storm-surge barriers and setting up emergency command centers at the plants.

Rally organizer Makoto Yanagida said the new rules are flawed because they were made before the cause of the Fukushima accident has been finally determined.

Jul. 8, 2013 - Updated 05:01 UTC

Evacuees from Fukushima not so happy about restart

July 8, 2013

Fukushima evacuees criticize plans to restart nuclear reactors

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130708p2a00m0na013000c.html>

IYO, Ehime -- Evacuees from the Fukushima nuclear disaster who now live near nuclear reactors targeted for restart by power companies are uneasy and critical about power companies' plans to restart nuclear reactors.

"They can't say 100 percent that a disaster won't occur, and they're trying to take that risk. More than anger, I feel sadness," says Hiroshi Watanabe, 34, a farmer who evacuated from Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, to Iyo, Ehime Prefecture, with his family. They now live near Ikata Nuclear Power Plant.

Shikoku Electric Power Co., which owns the plant, has applied for a safety evaluation to have the No. 3 reactor restarted.

Back in Fukushima, Watanabe made a living growing rice and vegetables and raising chickens around 12 kilometers from the disaster-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. He used less artificial fertilizers and agricultural chemicals as a farmer, for which he was well-received. He was just in the middle of working with local governments and local farmers on plans to use organic farming to bring economic benefit to the area when the nuclear disaster struck.

"The blessings of the land, our efforts, everything went to nothing," he says.

Together with his wife and two daughters, he evacuated to Ehime Prefecture, where he had spent his university days. They set up a new home that is around 40 kilometers from the Ikata plant. Watanabe borrowed some land and began growing rice and mandarins. His income recovered to about half of what it had been in Fukushima, and his wife had a son.

However, he carries with him the fear of a nuclear accident happening here as well, and he joined other residents in a December 2011 lawsuit to block the restart of the Ikata plant.

However, many people in the town of Ikata, which hosts the plant, want it to restart. Mamoru Mizumoto, a 54-year-old restaurant owner, says, "I strongly welcome (the application to restart the reactor.)" Many of his regular patrons are nuclear plant workers. Since the Ikata plant shut all its reactors in January last year, his sales have been down to a third of what they were when the reactors were all running.

"If not for the reinforcement construction on the No. 3 reactor (that started in spring), I might have had to close shop," he says.

Watanabe has some sympathy for such businesses, but says, "**It's too late to act once a disaster has occurred.** Until a verdict is reached (in the lawsuit), I want the authorities to hold back on giving a green light to restarting reactors."

Another disaster evacuee, Naomi Namekata, 44, is critical of Hokkaido Electric Power Co. (HEPCO)'s filing for permission to run its No. 1 through 3 reactors at the Tomari Nuclear Power Plant.

"The nuclear disaster has not been taken care of yet, nor is the damage from it under control. And yet, they are acting as if the disaster never happened at all," she complains.

In January 2012, almost a year after the disaster, she evacuated from Aizuwakamatsu, Fukushima Prefecture, to Sapporo's Atsubetsu Ward with her 13-year-old son, moving into a home provided by the

Hokkaido Prefectural Government. She soon began working at an association supporting evacuees of the disaster who came to the prefecture. What most pleased her on moving to her new home was "that I can buy food without worrying about radiation." Nothing had worried her more than the effects of radiation on her son.

HEPCO stresses the safety measures it has taken at the Tomari plant, but the Fukushima No.1 plant was also supposed to have had safety measures. Namekata says, "It's wrong to so hastily pursue a restart of the reactors."

Anti-nuclear mothers

July 8, 2013

Mothers pray for nuclear-free Japan on Tanabata Festival day

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201307080081

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Mothers and their young children celebrated the traditional July 7 Tanabata Festival outside the prime minister's office in Tokyo where they offered up prayers for a nuclear-free Japan.

Following the tradition, participants set up bamboo trees at the site of famous Friday night anti-nuclear demonstrations and hung hundreds of strips of paper containing wishes, called "tanzaku," on bamboo branches, praying for eradication of nuclear energy.

"No nuclear power for safer future for children," read one of the wishes.

Among the event organizers was Nonoko Kameyama, a 36-year-old photographer who has taken pictures of mothers and children who have been evacuated to Kyushu and other remote regions from Fukushima Prefecture, home of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. About 500 people attended the event.

Participants appealed for citizens to raise their voices in whatever community they belong and do whatever they can to eliminate nuclear power.

Mothers stage anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130707_29.html

Hundreds of mothers staged an anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo on Sunday, one day before power firms apply to restart 5 nuclear plants under new safety standards.

The organizer said about 500 women gathered in front of the prime minister's office.

They included residents of Fukushima Prefecture and women who have lived in temporary housing since the Fukushima nuclear accident 2 years ago.

A mother of 5 said she doesn't want to see another nuclear accident like the one in Fukushima Prefecture. She urged the demonstrators to work together to protect their children's future.

Another woman said she cannot understand why the operators want to restart the plants so quickly when she has to bring up her children amid the fear of exposure to radiation from the Fukushima plant.

She said she will continue to campaign against nuclear power for her children's sake.

About 20,000 anti-nuclear messages were collected from across the country for the rally. Japanese people traditionally celebrate the Star Festival on July 7th by writing down their wishes and hanging the paper strips from bamboo trees.

The 4 utilities plan to submit applications on Monday for permission to restart 5 nuclear plants.
Jul. 7, 2013 - Updated 15:19 UTC

Nuclear protest fading

July 10, 2013

2013 Election: Nuclear Protest Fade

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/newsline/201307112000.html>

433 candidates running in the election
energy future high on the list of voters' preoccupation
Have Japanese become complacent?
More debate is needed

49.7% against restart (14.4 in favour)

July 12, 2013

Nearly half of Japanese against reactor restarts, poll finds

Jiji

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/12/national/nearly-half-of-japanese-against-reactor-restarts-poll-finds/#.UeBiKaxSb9k>

Nearly half of Japanese people are against Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's plan to restart nuclear reactors that meet new safety standards, a Jiji Press opinion poll showed Friday.

The proportion of people who oppose the nuclear policy came to 49.7 percent, against 41.1 percent who back it, according to the survey.

The poll showed that many Japanese remain cautious about the restart of nuclear reactors despite the tighter standards.

Supporters of Seikatsu no To (People's Life Party) and Midori no Kaze (Green Wind), both small opposition parties, fully opposed the restart of reactors.

The proportion of party supporters who oppose reactor restarts came in at 87.5 percent for the Social Democratic Party, 76.9 percent for the Japanese Communist Party, 68.2 percent for Your Party, 66.7 percent for the Democratic Party of Japan, 57.9 percent for New Komeito and 57.1 percent for Nippon Ishin No Kai (Japan Restoration Party).

By contrast, 56.4 percent of supporters of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party back restarts, while 35.5 percent opposed them.

The survey was conducted over the four days through Monday, the day the new safety standards were put into effect, receiving responses from 1,298 adults nationwide.

At present, only two reactors out of the nation's 50 viable units are in operation. The rest remain idled in light of the triple-meltdown disaster at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant that started in March 2011.

Nukes swept under the rug

July 20, 2013

CRUCIAL VOTE: Protesters say candidates skirting nuclear power issue

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201307200045

Frustrated by candidates who have seemingly swept the nuclear power issue under the rug, protesters rallied in Tokyo to call for an end to Japan's dependence on nuclear energy as campaigning for the Upper House election drew to a close.

The activists gathered near the prime minister's office in Tokyo's Nagatacho district on July 19. The election will be held on July 21.

"All we hear is a need to end a divided Diet," said a 62-year-old homemaker from Tokyo's Suginami Ward. "Nuclear power generation is hidden from campaign issues.

"If we talk about nuclear plants, people will think about them. I hope that more discussions will be held during the Upper House election campaign."

A 68-year-old man was disheartened that anti-nuclear parties have failed to unify their candidates.

"I suspect that people who support a move away from nuclear energy cannot tell which (party) they should vote for," he said.

When a candidate told the crowd, "We cannot condone ignoring public opinion and restarting nuclear reactors," many protesters cheered their approval.

"I never want the suffering of Fukushima to happen again," said a 68-year-old woman who is an evacuee from Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture.

The woman said she and her husband have been living in Tokyo's Minato Ward for the past two years and have no idea whether they will be able to return home.

At a meeting before official campaigning started, she asked some Diet members to explain the standards by which restarting reactors can be judged safe. But no one replied.

She also said that few candidates seem willing to discuss the nuclear issue in TV debates.

"The issue will be forgotten if we do not have Diet members who will give serious thoughts to Fukushima," she said.

Taro Yamamoto elected - "the potential of the Internet"

July 22, 2013

Actor-turned-anti-nuclear activist wins Upper House seat

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201307220053

Actor Taro Yamamoto, an independent newcomer who campaigned on a platform of abandoning nuclear power generation, was elected to the Upper House on July 21 from the Tokyo five-seat district for the first time.

"This is where the real fight begins," said Yamamoto, 38, after pumping his fist in the air before supporters. "I want to continue to call for the abolition of nuclear power."

Yamamoto, who started his anti-nuclear power activities immediately after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami triggered the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, left his talent agency the same year to avoid controversy over his opinions.

He ran for the Lower House election in December from the Tokyo No. 8 district, but failed to win a seat in the chamber.

Although some political parties proposed supporting Yamamoto in the Upper House election, the anti-nuclear activist refused their offers, saying, "I will win using civilian power alone."

More than 1,200 volunteers from across Japan, whom Yamamoto had recruited through his Twitter feed and Facebook page, campaigned for Yamamoto. The number of Yamamoto's Twitter followers is 200,000, compared to 150,000 followers of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Aggressively exploiting the Internet to gain a larger following, his supporters broadcast live interviews of Yamamoto from inside a car.

In addition to volunteers, Yamamoto hired veteran campaign staff members, which largely contributed to the victory. He focused the argument on the nuclear issue to win the hearts of voters who are concerned about the government's nuclear policy.

"Those who do not have high hopes for the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Japan, as well as do not like the Japanese Communist Party, have voted for Yamamoto," said the chief of Yamamoto's campaign office. "In addition, all our strategies have worked out as we expected."

"Thanks to the power of volunteers, I have won the election without depending on any political parties," Yamamoto said. "I think this shows the potential of the Internet for election campaigns."

Yamamoto, who formed a party named Shinto Ima wa Hitori (New party, I am alone right now) before the December Lower House election, told his supporters after his win, "I am no longer alone."

Nukes and the "music" of metal balls

July 28, 2013

Nagasaki students to embody threat of nuclear weapons through sounds

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201307280044

By TASUKU UEDA/ Staff Writer

NAGASAKI--Symbolically, local high school students will drop a single small black ball onto a metal plate to represent the atomic bomb that was dropped on their city on Aug. 9, 1945, killing some 70,000 citizens instantly, at the opening of a cultural event later this month.

After a pause for dramatic effect, they will drop 17,000 more balls to represent the comparable number of nuclear weapons believed to exist in the world today, and the threat they pose to humanity.

The students from nine schools are working for the organizing committee for the All Japan High School Cultural Festival. The performance was proposed by Koji Nanba, a student at Seido Mikawadai High School in Nagasaki. The third-year student experienced it as part of peace studies last August, and hopes it will prompt the 20,000 students expected to attend to reflect.

"We have to abolish nuclear weapons to prevent such a tragedy from taking place," Nanba said. "I hope our presentation will serve as a catalyst for thought for people who gather in Nagasaki for the event."

He found it compelling when Kathleen Sullivan, a U.S. disarmament educator and anti-nuclear specialist, called for the abolition of nuclear arms after she gave the performance at his school.

Nanba said that when he closed his eyes and strained to hear the first ball being dropped, he could visualize the image of a flattened Nagasaki that he has seen in numerous photos.

The single ball dropping on the plate creates a crashing noise. When the rest of the balls are dropped, the sound is expected to reverberate for about 30 seconds in the light-dimmed venue for the opening ceremony on July 31.

Nanba will address the audience attending the ceremony of the cultural festival, among the largest for high school students in the nation, saying, "Imagine."

Each time a ball drops and makes a sound in the performance, it represents people being wiped off the face of the planet.

The festival will run through Aug. 4, featuring 24 sections, such as a parade, chorus, calligraphy, photography and orchestral music.

Q&A to Yamamoto

July 30, 2013

INTERVIEW: Actor-turned-activist Yamamoto wants to be catalyst in Diet

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201307300090

By SHIGEKI TOSA/ Staff Writer

Taro Yamamoto, an actor best known for his starring role in the 2000 blockbuster "Battle Royale," has been waging another battle since the 2011 nuclear disaster: to rid Japan of nuclear power plants.

After his failed attempt to win a Lower House seat in December, Yamamoto, 38, rebounded to capture a seat as an independent in Tokyo in the Upper House election earlier this month.

In an interview with The Asahi Shimbun, Yamamoto said he is determined during his six-year term to wean the nation from its reliance on nuclear energy, but also intends to tackle other issues facing the socially weak such as poverty and labor problems.

Yamamoto knows first hand what it feels like to be marginalized. He found himself ostracized in the entertainment industry after he made public his anti-nuclear stance in the weeks following the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Excerpts of the interview follow:

Question: What is your take on capturing 660,000 votes in Tokyo in the Upper House election amid the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's landslide victory?

Yamamoto: We are entering the dark ages. It is not that the LDP was strong. But there were an overwhelming number of voters who abandoned their efforts to express themselves through their votes. If they had gone to polling stations, power would have been less badly concentrated as it is now. The fact that I won a seat in Tokyo despite being an independent is symbolic of a future possibility that things can be changed.

Q: Did you have any inner conflict over voicing your opposition to nuclear power generation?

A: There were two sides of me: one which wants to voice my opposition, and the other, which does not want to. It was a struggle between my two selves. As a result, I could not sleep well and even shouted "meltdown!" in my sleep.

I began voicing opposition to nuclear energy in my tweets three weeks after the nuclear accident occurred. I did that because I came to realize that we did not have the right to freedom of expression or the right to live as the disaster developed.

I wondered why we cannot say no to things which we believe should not be tolerated. The moment I tweeted my opposition, I could not stop crying. I felt like I had returned to being a human being.

Q: The consequence is that the entertainment industry has deprived you of roles.

A: I was aware that I would have fewer offers for parts if I continued to speak out and act for the cause. But then the science ministry announced standards for children's radiation dosage. It, in my view, is a message that government officials don't care about children's future since (the standards indicated) radiation exposure will not pose an immediate threat to their health.

That made me decide this is not the time I should be only concerned about my livelihood. The public should have been informed about both the safe and hazardous aspects of radiation, but the media and the government failed in this.

It certainly caused me problems (by openly opposing nuclear energy). Nothing can be done without money on TV shows and the stage. A person who was sympathetic to my plight planned to give me a part, but the sales side shunned the idea. I became a pariah.

Q: Why did you decide to run for the Diet?

A: Because I felt like I was being ostracized by society. But after I begin to see beyond the nuclear power issue, I became aware that problems also exist in the business world. The discarding of people has been going on for a long time. Some politicians have created a system that benefits them.

Q: Where do you begin as a politician?

A: What a single member of the Diet can do is really limited. I am going to travel all across the country to see for myself what is going on, making the best use of a Diet member's badge and pass to use Japan Railways services for free. I hope to help create a nationwide movement with people who see problems in not only nuclear power generation, but also poverty and labor issues.

I have just one seat. But I will strive to gain more power and influence. I may sound foolish, but you cannot change the nation without taking the reins of government.

Q: Are you going to ally yourself with a particular party?

A: That is a tough question. Some politicians are really committed to their agenda. I want to work with them to expand my knowledge. What is important is not which party, but which lawmakers.

Gov. Izumida not happy with safety checks

July 30, 2013

Niigata governor protests nuclear safety standards

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130730_29.html

The governor of Niigata has refused a Cabinet minister's request to allow a nuclear power plant operator in the prefecture to apply for a government safety screening to restart operations.

Economic Revitalization Minister Akira Amari met Governor Hirohiko Izumida in Tokyo on Tuesday.

Izumida said that undergoing a government safety screening and deciding to restart the plant are separate issues and consistent efforts should be made to heighten safety.

Amari sought the governor's approval for Tokyo Electric Power Company to apply for the screening process to restart its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in Niigata Prefecture.

Izumida replied that the safety check is unsatisfactory in many ways, and no one is paying attention even when he voices his opinion to the government's nuclear regulator.

Hiroshima mayor urging solidarity with anti-nuke countries

August 1, 2013

Hiroshima to urge gov't to enhance solidarity with anti-nuke nations

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130801p2g00m0dm055000c.html>

HIROSHIMA (Kyodo) -- Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui will urge the central government to strengthen its solidarity with the nations that have called for the elimination of atomic arms at the 68th anniversary of the city's atomic-bombing, according to the gist of his statement for the event released Thursday.

The phrase was incorporated into the peace declaration Matsui will read in the Aug. 6 ceremony in light of the government's failure to back a statement endorsed by dozens of countries at April's preparatory committee session in Geneva for the next Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review meeting, he told a news conference.

"The government is searching earnestly for ways to endorse it next time, so it is Hiroshima's mission to urge it to do so definitely," he said.

Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue, who released the previous day the gist of his own statement for the Aug. 9 anniversary of the city's bombing, said he will rebuke the government by saying its failure to endorse the Geneva statement "contradicts" a stance Japan should take as the only country to have suffered from atomic weapons.

Matsui, however, appears set to use softer expressions in urging the government to join the nations that demanded in the April statement that nuclear weapons not be used under any circumstances.

The gist of the Hiroshima mayor's message also stops short of clarifying the city's stance on the issue of revising the pacifist Constitution and the appropriateness of nuclear power as an energy source.

Instead, he will say Hiroshima is a city that embodies the noble principle of pacifism as upheld by the Japanese Constitution, and he will call on Tokyo to promptly establish a responsible policy by putting the

top priority on citizens' livelihood and safety, according to the gist, distinguishing, he said, nuclear energy from nuclear weapons.

He will also express concern about Japan and India negotiating over nuclear cooperation that enables Japanese businesses to export nuclear power technology to the non-NPT nuclear-capable state.

Robert Jacobs & awareness

U.S. professor connects global nuclear victims, raises awareness

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201308060080

By HAJIMU TAKEDA/ Staff Writer

HIROSHIMA--An American professor living in Hiroshima is getting the young descendants of hydrogen and atomic bomb survivors to tell their stories, as well as linking victims of nuclear weapons and accidents around the world, to prevent future tragedies.

Robert Jacobs, 53, an associate professor of the history of nuclear weapons and scientific technology at Hiroshima City University, settled near the city's Mitakidera temple seven years ago. The old temple is well known for offering water of the falls on its grounds to the annual Peace Memorial Ceremony, held on Aug. 6 to commemorate victims of the 1945 U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Jacobs has interviewed a number of people at nuclear testing sites and in areas affected by nuclear accidents all over the world.

In the late 1960s, when the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in a nuclear arms race, Jacobs participated in a series of evacuation drills as an elementary school student in Chicago.

Jacobs said he thought at that time the world would come to an end before he became an adult. The feeling of fear inspired Jacobs to read a large number of books about the nuclear issue.

During his college days, Jacobs worked as an anti-nuclear activist between his studies.

Looking back, Jacobs said he had been involved with Hiroshima for most of his life without realizing it. As he traveled around the world, Jacobs found that victims of nuclear weapons and nuclear plants, regardless of where they lived, were deceived by politicians and scientists and emotionally wounded.

Although they were told by politicians and scientists that nuclear testing and nuclear plants would do them no harm, the reality 10 or 20 years later was much different, Jacobs said.

He started the Global Hibakusha Project to help prevent more people from becoming nuclear victims. In the project, Jacobs is training his graduate students and other grandchildren of hibakusha to record the oral histories of A-bomb survivors to pass down their experiences to future generations.

The stories of descendants of people on the Marshall Islands, who were exposed to fallout from U.S. nuclear bomb tests on Bikini Atoll in the 1940s and 1950s, are also being recorded.

The young Japanese and Marshall Islanders are being encouraged to interact with each other using a free online voice chat service

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Next spring Jacobs plans to hold an event on the Marshall Islands in which young people from areas around the world that were once affected by nuclear weapons can talk face to face

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On Aug. 6, Jacobs participated in a “die-in” protest in front of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome), the building that withstood the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and became an international symbol of peace, on the anniversary of the 1945 bombing. He has taken part in the event every year since moving to the city.

Jacobs also said he would work toward connecting areas affected by nuclear weapons and accidents to reduce the number of future victims.

"The ultimate inhumane weapon and an absolute evil"

August 6, 2013

Take a stand against nuclear weapons

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/08/06/editorials/take-a-stand-against-nuclear-weapons/#.UgEgiqxSab0>

Sixty-eight years have passed since atomic bombs were used against people for the first time — on Aug. 6, 1945, in Hiroshima and three days later in Nagasaki. Policymakers the world over should take concrete action toward the abolition of nuclear weapons by listening to what Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui said in his 2013 Peace Declaration on Tuesday, the 68th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing.

Mr. Matsui reminded us that nuclear weapons are “the ultimate inhumane weapon and an absolute evil” because of their nature: “Indiscriminately stealing the lives of innocent people, permanently altering the lives of survivors, and stalking their minds and bodies to the end of their days.”

His next statement expressed common sense thinking that leaders of nuclear weapons states should take to heart. “Policymakers of the world, how long will you remain imprisoned by distrust and animosity? Do you honestly believe you can continue to maintain national security by rattling your sabers?”

He continued: “Please come to Hiroshima. Encounter the spirit of the *hibakusha* (atomic bombing survivors). Look squarely at the future of the human family without being trapped in the past, and decide to shift to a system of security based on trust and dialogue.”

The current situation is far from the ideal as described by the Hiroshima mayor. There are some 17,000 nuclear weapons all over the world, including those to be scrapped. Despite U.S. President Barack Obama’s call for further mutual cuts in nuclear arsenals, Russia has not yet responded positively. In February, North Korea carried out its third nuclear explosion test. There is a report that Iran already possesses enough enriched uranium to make six or more nuclear bombs.

In Japan, the nuclear crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.’s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant continues, threatening further contamination of the environment with radioactive materials. In addition, Japan has stockpiled some 44 tons of plutonium extracted from spent nuclear fuel. Such plutonium can be converted into the ingredients for a nuclear weapon.

As the first country to suffer the dread of exposure to radiation from a nuclear attack, Japan has a special responsibility to move forward with efforts to eliminate such weapons. Yet, on April 24 it refused to sign an important statement supported by 74 countries at the second session in Geneva of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The statement said in part, “It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances.”

Japanese officials stress that because Japan is under the U.S. nuclear umbrella, it cannot sign such a statement. But even if the current security arrangement cannot be changed anytime soon, the Japanese government has a moral duty to draw up a long-term security plan that is not dependent on nuclear weapons. Japan, which knows firsthand the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, must have the courage to declare that nuclear weapons are an absolute evil, and work strenuously toward their abolishment.

Hiroshima marks atomic bombing anniversary

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130806_20.html

Prayers for peace are reverberating across Hiroshima, as the Japanese city marks 68 years since the atomic bombing at the end of World War Two.

About 50,000 people attended a ceremony on Tuesday morning at the Peace Memorial Park, close to the epicenter of the bombing on August 6th, 1945.

A list of more than 286,000 a-bomb victims was presented to a cenotaph. Newly added are the names of nearly 6,000 people who died or were confirmed dead from the effect of the bomb during the past year.

At 8:15 AM, the exact time the bomb was dropped, the peace bell tolled and the participants observed a moment of silent prayer.

In his peace declaration, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui called the atomic bomb the ultimate inhumane weapon and an absolute evil.

He urged the Japanese government to strengthen ties with other governments pursuing the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In a message to policymakers around the world, the mayor asked: "How long will you remain imprisoned by distrust and animosity? Do you honestly believe you can continue to maintain national security by rattling your sabers?"

Matsui invited world leaders to come to Hiroshima, encounter the spirit of the "Hibakusha" bombing survivors, and make decisions to shift to a system of security based on trust and dialogue.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said in his speech that as citizens of the only nation in the world to have suffered an atomic bombing, the Japanese people have a responsibility to realize a world free of nuclear weapons.

Abe said they must keep on telling generations to come that nuclear weapons bring about inhumane consequences.

Among those attending the ceremony was Mayor Tamotsu Baba of Namie Town in Fukushima Prefecture. The March 2011 nuclear accident has forced the town's entire population of more than 20,000 to evacuate.

US film director Oliver Stone attended the ceremony for the first time. Stone has directed a documentary, questioning the legitimacy of the US atomic bombings in Japan.

Antinuke Katsuma Yagasaki

August 7, 2013

Anti-nuke speaker pledges to continue fight following wife's death

Katsuma Yagasaki, center, is seen with his daughter and grandchild at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima on Aug. 6. (Mainichi)

HIROSHIMA -- An anti-nuclear speaker and professor emeritus attending the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony on Aug. 6 vowed to continue his fight, even after the passing of his wife earlier this year.

Katsuma Yagasaki, 69, lost his wife Yaemi, 66, in January this year. Yaemi was an indirect bombing victim, having been exposed to A-bomb radiation while a fetus in her mother's womb.

Yagasaki became an assistant teacher at the University of the Ryukyus after completing graduate school at Hiroshima University in 1974. He specialized in material physics and had learned mostly about things like magnets and superconductors, but he went on to become involved in research on nuclear weapons, depleted uranium bullets and internal radiation exposure. He also appeared as a court witness in a group lawsuit by bombing victims seeking recognition of their illnesses as caused by A-bomb radiation. Yagasaki spoke for the plaintiffs' side and testified about the dangers of internal radiation exposure.

Yagasaki met Yaemi while he was still a graduate student and she was a newspaper reporter. "I was taken in by her rich expressions and energetic manner of speaking," says Yagasaki.

He cannot forget the time when, before their marriage in 1971, Yaemi revealed to him that she had been exposed to radiation while in the womb. As she explained while they sat at a cafe near the university, a tear rolled down her cheek. Yaemi's mother had been exposed to radiation when she entered Hiroshima after the blast. She came down with cancer twice, and died half a year after Yagasaki and Yaemi's marriage.

"Nuclear bombs cause suffering of both mind and body, all throughout life," says Yagasaki. His experiences with the repercussions of radiation later motivated him to help the victims of the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster. Soon after the disaster struck, he entered the area and began taking environmental radiation measurements. He has also given over 200 speeches warning about the dangers of internal radiation exposure and calling for prevention measures. Yaemi, meanwhile, set up a citizen's group to help disaster refugees who fled to Okinawa, where she and Yagasaki lived.

"Though the fields we acted in were different, we both wanted to help people suffering from radiation exposure," says Yagasaki.

At the ceremony on Aug. 6, Yagasaki, as usual, kept a hand-written note given to him by Yaemi on his 70th birthday last year in his shirt pocket, along with a picture of her.

"At the ceremony, I felt agreement with the criticism of the Fukushima nuclear disaster and the Japan-India nuclear power agreement negotiations, and then as pigeons flew through the air, feelings of loneliness surged up and tears came to my eyes," says Yagasaki.

The message from Yaemi reads, "Katsuma, keep revealing the dangers of internal radiation exposure! The future of the Earth depends on it. Listen to me and do your best!"

Looking up at the summer sky, Yagasaki said, "I'll do what I can, as much as possible."

Meanwhile, representatives from countries armed with nuclear weapons were also present at the memorial ceremony. British ambassador to Japan Tim Hitchens said at the ceremony that his nation is working to reduce its number of nuclear warheads by 25 percent by 2020.

Israel, which is effectively nuclear-armed but not a member of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, has been participating in the memorial ceremony since 2009. At the ceremony, Israeli Ambassador Nissim Ben-Shitrit expressed concern over Iran, which is suspected of nuclear weapons development, and said that his country would consider joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty but the current situation makes doing so difficult.

Fundamental differences over nukes

August 6, 2013

Nuke opponents feud over bombs vs. power

by Eric Johnston

Staff Writer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/06/national/nuke-opponents-feud-over-bombs-vs-power-2/#.UgHxn6xSab0>

OSAKA – Every August, thousands of visitors from Japan and around the world gather in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to commemorate the dropping of the atomic bombs. In addition to the solemn ceremonies that draw survivors and VIPs, there are numerous side events dedicated to seeking the elimination of nuclear weapons.

But while most everyone in Hiroshima and Nagasaki shares a determination to ensure that atomic weapons are never used again, long-standing, fundamental differences over nuclear power have split Japan's peace and nonproliferation movements.

Two of the main groups seeking an end to the weapons are the Japan Conference Against A- and H-Bombs (Gensuikin), and the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo). Gensuikin's activities have traditionally been supported by the Social Democratic Party and its predecessors, while Gensuikyo has been supported by the Japanese Communist Party.

Gensuikyo was established in 1955, after the Fukuryu Maru No. 5 incident of 1954, when the Japanese vessel was exposed to radiation contamination following a U.S. hydrogen bomb test at Bikini Atoll.

Later, infighting and factionalism split Gensuikyo into several groups, one of which was the Socialist-backed Gensuikin.

Two other groups working to abolish nuclear weapons include the National Council for Peace and Against Nuclear Weapons (Kakkin) and the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo), whose 6.8 million members make it the country's largest trade union.

Since 2005, Rengo, Gensuikin and Kakkin have worked together during international peace conferences held every year in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while Gensuikyo has held separate events.

In its annual declaration this time around, Gensuikyo noted the situation at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant remains serious but did not call for abolishing nuclear power in general, only the kind that has the possibility for dual civilian and military use.

“We oppose the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and the accumulation of plutonium and the military use of nuclear power,” the declaration states.

The alliance between Rengo, Gensuikin and Kakkin has always been uneasy due to their differences over nuclear power. Kakkin calls for the abolishment of nuclear weapons and offers support to hibakusha, but it also promotes the “peaceful use of nuclear power.”

Gensuikin opposes nuclear power and Rengo tries to take a middle-of-the-road approach.

Since the catastrophe started in Fukushima, the philosophies of the groups, especially Kakkin’s, toward nuclear power could not be glossed over after Gensuikin came out very strongly against atomic energy, angering Kakkin, whose members include people in the Federation of Electric Power Related Industry Workers’ Unions of Japan (Denryoku Soren), a group of utility company workers who favor nuclear power.

Last August, prior to last year’s Hiroshima conference, Koichi Kawano, the Gensuikin head, who survived the Nagasaki bombing, declared that nuclear materials, including those used for nuclear power, and the human race cannot coexist, a comment that angered Kakukin’s utility supporters.

In the end, differences between Gensuikin and Kakkin could not be overcome. Each of the three groups held its own conference this year. Spokesmen for Gensuikin and Kakkin indicated they remain apart on nuclear power, though Gensuikin at least is willing to keep talking.

“The idea of eliminating nuclear power altogether has been born in the national debate. We have to include that in our activities. That (the three groups) couldn’t do things together is a shame,” said Gensuikin Secretary-General Yasunari Fujimoto.

Concentrate efforts on Fukushima crisis, say activists

August 8, 2013

Activists prod NRA to get serious about Fukushima water crisis

by Kazuaki Nagata

Staff Writer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/08/national/activists-prod-nra-to-get-serious-about-fukushima-water-crisis/#.UgPsv6xSab0>

Citizens' groups and lawmakers urged the government Thursday to bring the reactor restart evaluation process to a halt and put all efforts and resources into containing the groundwater flow contaminating the Pacific at the Fukushima No. 1 plant.

Ten activist groups, including Greenpeace Japan and Green Action, hosted a gathering in the capital where they met with officials of the Nuclear Regulation Authority to express their opinions on the water crisis and submit their petition for the demand.

"Currently, the NRA is using its time and resources for checking if some of the reactors are ready to restart, but now is not the time for that. Please have every available resource and policy focused on solving the tainted-water issue," the petition read.

The groups said they collected about 6,400 signatures from individuals as well as 214 organizations, in just two days.

The NRA officials at the gathering in Chiyoda Ward said there are no plans to suspend the reactor evaluations, which began in July. All nuclear utilities have to meet the NRA's new safety rules before restarting their reactors.

About 80 NRA officials are checking the reactor restart applications and 42 are working on the water crisis.

The government on Wednesday said that about 300 tons of highly radioactive groundwater is pouring into the Pacific each day.

At the gathering, Takashi Nakajima, a supermarket manager in the city of Minamisoma close to the crippled nuclear plant, participated in the Tokyo gathering by phone.

"It is incomprehensible" that the NRA is not fully focusing on the water crisis when consumers are refusing to buy fish caught in the area because of radiation poisoning fears, Nakajima said.

Two definitions to hibakusha - "No more hibakusha"

August 8, 2013 ****

'No more hibakusha' takes on new meaning after 3/11

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/08/07/commentary/no-more-hibakusha-takes-on-new-meaning-after-311/#.UgMxQKxSab0>

by Ryan Masaaki Yokota

Special To The Japan Times

CHICAGO – I remember quite vividly the televised news of the 2011 earthquake that hit the Tohoku region. Like most of the world, I watched in horror at the destructive force of the tsunami that swept away whole regions of the Japanese coast.

My first thoughts went to relatives in Fukushima City some distance away, whom I had been able to reconnect with just the previous year. Yet, when news came of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant's reactor meltdowns, I was struck with an even deeper sense of sorrow arising from personal outrage that, once again on Japanese soil, a new generation of *hibakusha* had been born.

It may be surprising to many people that there are in fact two major categories of "hibakusha" and this is a subtlety that is not captured in the English use of the word. Typically when one hears the word hibakusha in English, one thinks of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II and those people, such as my own paternal grandparents, who survived the nuclear bomb blasts.

However, when written in kanji, slightly different combinations are used depending on whether one is a survivor of nuclear weapon blasts or whether one is a survivor of exposure to nuclear radiation. I think that it is important for us to bear this distinction in mind so that we can begin to open up our definition to be more inclusive of survivors of the effects of both nuclear weapons and nuclear radiation.

In addition to the survivors of the nuclear weapons blasts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who live in Japan, it is also important for us to recognize the hibakusha who live around the world, especially the many who live in places like the United States and South Korea. Koreans in particular, some of whom were brought to Japan as wartime laborers, have often been excluded from popular depictions of survivor literature.

There are also the hibakusha who had been exposed to nuclear radiation from nuclear bomb testing, especially in places such as the Marshall Islands, where whole communities were used as unwitting test subjects for studies of nuclear radiation effects and were forcibly relocated from their indigenous lands.

A corollary to the nuclear weapons testing in the Marshall Islands was the unfortunate Japanese crew members of the Lucky Dragon (Fukuryu Maru) No. 5 tuna fishing boat who unexpectedly got caught in the test of a thermonuclear bomb in 1954 and exposed to nuclear fallout.

In the U.S., there are also many cases involving U.S. service members who were exposed to nuclear bomb tests without being fully informed of the possible effects. Added to this number are the many “downwinders” in places like the Nevada Test Site and Hanford, Washington, who had been exposed to drifting nuclear radiation during nuclear weapons manufacturing and testing from the 1940s through the 1960s.

These downwinders have received scant recognition from the general public and negligible compensation for the continuing health effects that they suffered.

Yet, as for the second definition of the term “hibakusha,” referring to survivors of exposure to nuclear radiation, there are also numerous other examples. The first and often most ignored were those people impacted by the uranium mining that produced both the ingredients for nuclear weapons and the fuel for nuclear power plants. Prominent examples were cases involving the Navajo people living in the American Southwest, many of whom continue to experience lingering aftereffects of air, soil and water contamination.

Higher-profile cases, involving meltdowns at the nuclear power plants at Three Mile Island in 1979 and at Chernobyl in 1986 showed the truth to the fallacy that nuclear power plants were a safe, clean method of generating energy. And now, following the meltdowns at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, a new generation of hibakusha has been created out of those people in the Tohoku region who have found that their air, lands and fisheries have been contaminated by nuclear radiation. This dire situation has yet to fully unfold, as news of unreported leaks continues to come to light. It is hard to tell when we will be able to fully understand the scale of the radioactive contamination that occurred.

Previously, in Japan and around the world, the slogan of “No More Hibakusha!” has been used as a rallying cry to bring attention to the insanity of nuclear weapons and the threat of mutually assured destruction that defined the postwar present. Since the end of the Cold War such issues have tended to fall to the background and the focus has shifted from arms control between the U.S. and Russia towards nonproliferation.

And yet, as the historical pattern of nuclear power plant meltdowns demonstrates, it seems that in the midst of declaring our continued opposition to nuclear weapons, we should expand our demands to include both sides of the definition of hibakusha in our appeals.

The inability of energy companies to produce completely fail-safe nuclear power plants, coupled with the impacts of both the mining of radioactive fuels and the severe inadequacies of radioactive waste disposal policies, has shown that nuclear power is not the promised solution to our energy needs. In fact, the problems that nuclear power creates are measurable in radioactive half-lives sometimes of tens of thousands of years, a scale of measure that few of us really comprehend.

In sum, we must make our “No More Hibakusha!” appeal more comprehensive in our approach not only to nuclear weapons but also to our opposition to nuclear power plants, which continue to create new hibakusha. It is my opinion that the very future of our standing as a human race depends on how we address these critical questions today.

Ryan Masaaki Yokota is a Japanese/Okinawan American who is a current Ph.D. candidate in Japanese history at the University of Chicago.

Radical re-thinking of future is needed - "Be a hibakusha at heart"

August 6, 2013

EDITORIAL: We all must confront the ferocious destructive power of nuclear energy

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201308060052>

For decades, nuclear weapons and nuclear power generation have generally been treated as separate issues. But is this the right approach?

Japan is the only nation to have experienced nuclear devastation with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 68 years ago. It has also suffered a nuclear disaster that caused tremendous damage in Fukushima Prefecture.

We can no longer afford to put off confronting the unimaginably frightful risk posed by nuclear power.

HORROR OF 'NUCLEAR FAMINE'

In an attempt to focus global attention on the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons in the campaign for a complete ban on nuclear arsenals, a document called the “joint statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons” was submitted in April to the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of NPT parties held in Geneva. The statement signals an emerging trend toward going back to the basics in international negotiations for nuclear disarmament.

In recent years, a strong argument for a ban on nuclear arms made by many international nongovernmental organizations has been winning the support of a growing number of governments and gaining currency in the diplomatic arena. Those NGOs note that while there are treaties outlawing such inhumane weapons as chemical and biological weapons, as well as cluster bombs and antipersonnel land mines, there is no international agreement to ban nuclear arms. They rightly say this is nonsensical.

The joint statement, endorsed by 80 countries, points out the “unacceptable harm caused by the immense, uncontrollable destructive capability and indiscriminate nature” of nuclear weapons.

In an interview with The Asahi Shimbun, former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell called nuclear arms “such horrible weapons” and said they are “basically useless” in the military sense.

Powell has joined the growing ranks of former top security policy officials of nuclear powers who have started calling for the elimination of nuclear stockpiles. Although the nuclear powers didn’t endorse the joint statement, it is clear that nuclear weapons are becoming increasingly “unusable” as weapons.

The joint statement also says use of a nuclear weapon would destroy the environment beyond national borders and rob future generations of their health, food, water and other vital resources.

Scientists have long warned that a full-scale nuclear war between the United States and Russia would trigger a “nuclear winter” that could severely affect the climate for months, or even years.

A recent study by Alan Robock, an environmental scientist at Rutgers University, and others showed that a regional nuclear war in which India and Pakistan each uses 50 Hiroshima-size nuclear weapons, or half of their nuclear arsenals, could cause global “nuclear famine.” While these weapons account for only 0.03 percent of total destructive capability of the global nuclear arsenal, the study said that detonating them would cause massive pillars of black smoke and dust to rise high into the atmosphere, resulting in sharp declines in temperature around the world and serious depletion of the ozone layer. That would lead to a significant increase in harmful ultraviolet rays hitting the planet’s surface.

The effects would be long-lasting, eventually triggering a devastating global famine.

In short, we are still on the brink of wholesale destruction through nuclear warfare.

60 YEARS OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

Nuclear power generation inevitably entails some risk; for example, through abuse of the technology to produce nuclear arms, or nuclear proliferation.

Six decades ago, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered a speech titled “Atoms for Peace” to the U.N. General Assembly in New York. His speech ushered in the era that brought about widespread use of atomic energy to produce electricity.

Eisenhower proposed international control over nuclear materials and technologies as a step to promote peaceful use of atomic energy instead of military use.

After his speech, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty were born. But the international management of nuclear materials and technologies as proposed by Eisenhower failed to become reality and consequently nuclear proliferation became a serious challenge for the world.

In addition to the original members of the Nuclear Club--the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China--India, Pakistan and North Korea have carried out nuclear tests. Israel is also believed to possess nuclear arms. Iran has been pursuing what is widely suspected to be a program to develop nuclear arms.

It is expected that nuclear power generation will spread rapidly among developing countries in coming years. But nuclear power generation programs could be used by some countries as a cover for obtaining highly enriched uranium or plutonium to be used for producing nuclear arms.

The question is how to deal with the risk of nuclear proliferation through nuclear power generation.

At the NPT preparatory committee meeting in Geneva, Austria said it has “renounced the use of nuclear power in its national energy mix” out of concerns about nuclear accidents, terrorism and proliferation.

The country's policy of refraining from the use of atomic energy altogether to avoid the risk of nuclear destruction is worth serious attention.

JAPAN SHOULD RETHINK NUCLEAR ENERGY POLICY

The Japanese government didn't endorse the joint statement because of concerns that embracing the document could affect the nuclear deterrence that the United States provides to Japan. But Tokyo indicated it might support the statement in the future.

In addition to simply acknowledging the inhumane nature of nuclear arms, however, Japan should make more serious efforts to change its nuclear energy policy, which runs counter to the global campaign to reduce nuclear risks.

The Abe administration has made a great fuss about promoting exports of Japanese nuclear technology. But this policy carries inherent risk. It could spread the risk of not only nuclear proliferation but also radiation exposure and nuclear pollution. In addition, there is the problem of radioactive waste disposal.

If Japan concludes a nuclear energy cooperation agreement with India, which has turned its back on the NPT, the deal could further undermine the effectiveness of the NPT.

Tokyo clearly does not fully grasp the growing international concern about Japan's excessive stockpile of plutonium. The Abe administration says it intends to continue the controversial program to extract plutonium from spent nuclear fuel without offering any clear plan to reduce the country's stockpile of plutonium. The government should discard the senseless policy as soon as possible.

What the world expects from Japan probably is to provide effective leadership for necessary reform of the deeply flawed nuclear nonproliferation regime, which tends to amplify, rather than reduce, the risk.

Radically new thinking is vital for making sure that the spirit of the joint statement will be widely embraced internationally.

Hisashi Inoue (1934-2010), the late Japanese novelist and dramatist who wrote a play about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima titled "The Face of Jizo" ("Chichi to Kuraseba"), used to read many letters and notes written by "hibakusha," or A-bomb survivors. "Belatedly, I would like to be a hibakusha at heart," he once said.

It is crucial for Japanese to learn more about the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and get a better picture of the plight of people who have been affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Japanese people should become “hibakusha at heart” by sharing anxiety and fear about health hazards posed by exposure to radiation from atomic bombs and nuclear plants.

We should send clear messages about the contradictions between mankind and atomic energy to audiences both at home and abroad.

We are now at the crossroads of whether we can move the world toward a nuclear-free era or not.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Aug. 6

Mark Bittman (New York Times) on nukes

August 23, 2013

The New Nuclear Craze

http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/23/the-new-nuclear-craze/?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130824&r=0 By **MARK BITTMAN**

There is a new discussion about nuclear energy, prompted by well-founded concerns about carbon emissions and fueled by a pro-nuclear documentary called “Pandora’s Promise.” Add a statement by James E. Hansen — who famously sounded the alarm on climate change — and, of course, industry propaganda, and presto: We Love Nukes.

Before we all become pro-nuclear greens, however, you’ve got to ask three questions: Is nuclear power safe and clean? Is it economical? And are there better alternatives?

No, no and yes. So let’s not swap the pending environmental disaster of climate change for another that may be equally risky.

Despite all-out efforts and international cooperation, Fukushima, which scared Germany right out of the nuclear power business, still isn’t under control. Proponents of nuclear power promise new and safer technology, but these discussions are filled with “coulds”; no such plants exist. Nor would they reduce the risks of proliferation. (Oh, that little thing.)

Nor would they do much to mitigate the all-too-infrequently discussed dangers of uranium mining, which uses vast amounts of water in the West — an area that can ill afford it — and is barely regulated or even studied. Thousands of uranium mines have been abandoned, and no one seems to know how many remain to be cleaned up. The cost of that cleanup, of course, will be borne by taxpayers, not industry.

Then there's disposal of spent fuel, which is not contained at the same safety level as active fuel, itself a scary thought. Decades into the nuclear age there remains, incredibly, no real plan for this; a patchwork scheme by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which appears to be even more industry-friendly than most federal agencies, was rejected by an appeals court last year, and the Obama administration is standing by its campaign promise (shocking, I know) to abandon the nuclear repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada.

The economic viability of nuclear power is no more encouraging. Plants continue to close and generation rates continue to drop. Operators may indeed continue to make money on reactors, but that's only because federal subsidies are enormous. Insurance costs are limited. Loans are guaranteed (the Solyndra loan guarantee was half a billion dollars; in contrast, loan guarantees for new nuclear plants may run \$8 billion); cost recovery and return on investment are also assured for decades, and some operators are able to collect costs from ratepayers (and pay dividends to shareholders) years before plants come online — even if they never come online.

Fears of climate change are no reason to revive a doomed energy source.

So they're economical as long as you're the owner, because historically, subsidies for nuclear power have been more than double the expense of power generation itself. While estimates of the costs of power generation vary wildly — allowing both proponents and detractors of any given power technology to make their cases — few of them take externalities (costs to the environment or to public health, for example) into account. And nuclear power's externalities could exceed those for any other form of power generation except coal.

That's why we're reducing coal usage — if we had a strong climate policy it would be gone in a couple of decades, and nuclear should be right behind it. It's likely that no new nuclear plants will be built before true renewables are able to take the place of scary, highly damaging energy sources.

Which brings us full circle: the new proponents of nuclear power say that since nuclear power is arguably preferable to coal, maybe we should subsidize the building of new plants.

If those were the only options, maybe that argument would be a sound one. But they're not. Energy efficiency (remember that?), natural gas (imperfect, yes, but improvable) and wind are all cheaper. Even solar is already less expensive than nuclear power in good locations.

Some studies show that renewables can generate 80 percent of our electricity in 2050, using current technologies, while reducing carbon emissions from the electric sector by 80 percent. Climate change fears should be driving not old and disproven technologies but renewable ones, which are more practical. These technologies remain relatively small — non-hydro renewables were around 5 percent of the total last year — but they're growing so fast (wind and solar use have quadrupled in the last five years) that just this week the chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission predicted that solar power could soon begin to double every two years.

Utilities are afraid that solar power will be to the electrical grid what PCs were to mainframes, or e-mail to the Postal Service: a technology that will simply kill its predecessors. Coal and nuclear power are both doomed, and the profit-making power grid with it. That's all to our benefit.

Too much of an alarmist?

August 27, 2013

Of nuclear village idiots and radiation scare-mongers: letters

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/08/26/voices/of-nuclear-village-idiots-and-radiation-scare-mongers-letters/#.UhtkH39Sab0>

Nab Tepco execs, take over the clean-up

Until reading Brian Victoria's letter on Aug. 13, I felt at times that perhaps I was being too much of an alarmist over the radiation dangers at Fukushima's No. 1 nuclear power plant. But now I realize that, if anything, I was being a bit too optimistic.

Victoria called for the postponement of his university's Study Abroad Program in Japan out of concerns for the long-term welfare of any and all participants. It's his responsibility to make sure that none of the students in his Japan study program are ever at risk of being exposed to an unhealthy or deadly environment, one contaminated by radioactive chemicals.

Victoria fails to mention any of the troubling details that he learned during the two-day seminar he attended recently at the New York Academy of Sciences, though he did say that he was deeply worried about the "full scope of the ongoing dangers posed" at the Fukushima No. 1 disaster site.

Why is a New York medical academy better informed about the dangers of radioactive leaks in Fukushima than Japan's prime minister or possibly even the chief of the new Nuclear Regulatory Agency? And do educators in Japan have less regard for their students than Victoria does for his own? Just what are the dangers to one's health if exposed to 2.35 billion becquerels of cesium per liter of water? Why is Tepco so secretive, still?

It's way past time for the government to assume all clean-up operations at the crippled nuclear plant site in Fukushima. Tepco should have gone into bankruptcy on March 12, 2011, and all of its senior executives and engineers taken into custody for questioning and possible criminal prosecution. Criminal negligence has never been in doubt in the court of public opinion.

Tepco grossly failed in its responsibility to do everything possible to safeguard its Fukushima No. 1 plant from quake/tsunami-related catastrophe, despite warnings from a number of well-informed experts. Tepco pointedly ignored such expert opinion.

Is the president of Tepco in bed with PM Shinzo Abe? Is this why Abe is being so protective of the Tepco nuclear village idiots?

Why won't the Japanese government sponsor a medical seminar similar to the one held at the New York Academy of Sciences and inform the Japanese public about "the full scope of the ongoing dangers posed" by radiation leaks in Fukushima? Why? NHK could do a two- or three-day seminar and invite medical experts to fully inform the Japanese public.

But that would take courage, something the Liberal Democratic Party and the Tepco senior management team are sadly lacking.

I wonder when former PM Taro Aso is going to take a tour of Fukushima and shout peevishly at the local residents to "hurry up and die"?

ROBERT MCKINNEY

Otaru, Hokkaido

Come to Japan, catch less rads

In most places in the world, one would get a higher (natural) radiation dose than in Japan — except if one were to visit the immediate neighborhood of the defective No. 1 power plant, or if one insisted on sleeping right on top of one of the few hot spots a bit further away. Look at the radiation measurements on the web!

So, it would be advisable, for many people, in order to reduce their radiation exposure, to come to Japan. But do not come on a commercial high-altitude flight — this will give you a considerable radiation dose.

OTTO ALBRECHT

Atsugi, Kanagawa

Former PM Koizumi against nuclear power

August 26, 2013

Former PM Koizumi's anti-nuclear case makes sense

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20130826p2a00m0na008000c.html>

In mid-August, former Liberal Democratic Party leader and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, 71, visited Germany -- which has decided to give up nuclear power -- and Finland -- which continues to promote the technology. His impressions could be summed up thusly: I went and I understood abandoning nuclear power; I saw with my own eyes, and I am convinced.

Koizumi was accompanied by four executives from the nuclear power technology divisions of Toshiba, Hitachi, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. During the trip, one of these executives whispered in the former prime minister's ear, "You have a lot of influence. Do you think you could come around to our way of thinking? Will you be our friend?"

Koizumi looked at the executive and replied, "In my own experience of most big issues, if three out of 10 people agree with you, two will be against you, and the other five will say, 'whichever is fine with me.'

"If I was back in the Diet in my old job, trying to persuade undecided members on the nuclear power issue, I don't think I'd have it in me to convince them Japan 'needs nuclear power.' But after seeing what I've seen on this trip, I think I could persuade those members to move toward zero nuclear power. I'm more confident of that all the time."

The little exchange appeared casual, off-hand even. And yet it was just the latest step in a long dance between pro-nuclear Japanese industry and former PM Koizumi -- who has made several comments on denuclearizing Japan since March 2011 -- as each side probes the other's position.

The genesis of this odd-couple voyage was an April symposium attended by Koizumi and the presidents and CEOs of Japan Business Federation member companies. The captains of Japanese industry rose one after another to call for the continuation of nuclear power generation. And then Koizumi stood and roared, "That's no good!" The room sank immediately into dejected silence.

Right after his single-phrase contribution to the symposium, Koizumi hit on the idea of **visiting Onkalo, the massive subterranean spent nuclear fuel repository now under construction in Finland**. He also put Germany on his itinerary, a country focusing on producing renewable energy for domestic consumption. When Koizumi queried Japanese companies in the nuclear technology business about participating, they responded enthusiastically, and the Koizumi inspection team was born.

It's been said that nuclear power is like "an apartment without a toilet." All nations with nuclear power would like to build a final repository for their nuclear waste, i.e. a toilet, but no one wants such a dangerous facility anywhere near them, and there's no way to talk them around. **Onkalo is so far the only purpose-built final disposal facility in the world. It will take its first delivery of spent fuel in 2020.**

The thinking behind Onkalo is that the spent fuel will be locked deep underground for the 100,000 years or so needed for it to lose its toxicity. No structure built by human hands has ever lasted that long. It's hard to imagine where our species will be in 100 years let alone 100,000, so is it really permissible to bury such dangerous material with just the knowledge and technology we have today?

I had the opportunity to ask Koizumi what he thought, what he'd seen, upon his return to Japan.

"A hundred thousand years," he began. "They say they'll re-evaluate things in 300 years, but everyone alive now will be dead by then. In Japan, there's no place to dump the waste in the first place. We have no choice but to get rid of nuclear power."

I mentioned that there are many voices calling the immediate abandonment of nuclear power irrational, and that they have the upper hand.

"No, it's just the reverse," Koizumi told me. **"If no plan to get to zero nuclear power is produced now, eliminating atomic power will become all the more difficult in the future.** All the opposition parties agree that Japan should abandon nuclear power. If the prime minister decided to do it, he could do it. Once that decision was made, wise people would make their contributions" to ensure it happened.

"The most difficult job in battle belongs to the rear guard," Koizumi continued. "To withdraw" is the hardest part. "Look at the war in the Showa era (the second Sino-Japanese war and World War II). Japan should have withdrawn from Manchuria, but we couldn't. The business world says that the 'economy won't grow if we lose nuclear power,' but that's just not true. People used to say that 'Manchuria is Japan's lifeline,' but we lost Manchuria and Japan grew anyway, didn't it?"

"You know the expression, 'Necessity is the mother of invention,' don't you? Defeat in war, the oil shock, the Great East Japan Earthquake; difficult times are an opportunity. Japan should make itself into a recycling-based society that makes a resource out of nature itself."

I've always been anti-nuclear power, and so I listened to the former PM with delight. Unfortunately, though these words come from the mouth of Koizumi, the pro-nuclear camp will likely refuse to hear them. And so I'd like the undecided, the remaining five out of 10, to know what he has to say. (By Takao Yamada, Expert Senior Writer)

Scrap them all!

August 29, 2013

Fukushima towns to call for scrapping all reactors

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20130829_36.html

Municipal leaders in Fukushima will demand the decommissioning of all the 10 nuclear reactors in the prefecture, not just the damaged 4.

Mayors and assembly chiefs from the host towns of Futaba, Okuma, Tomioka and Naraha have for the first time jointly made their stance public after a meeting on Thursday.

Futaba and Okuma host the Fukushima Daiichi plant, where 4 of the 6 reactors were crippled in the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and are to be scrapped.

Tomioka and Naraha host the Fukushima Daini plant. Its 4 reactors escaped serious damage in the disaster.

Operator Tokyo Electric Power Company has yet to make clear what it will do with the remaining 6 reactors.

Many leaders said they can think of no alternative other than decommissioning all reactors when residents have been forced to live as evacuees for 2 and half years.

The towns plan to file the requests with the central government and TEPCO after their assemblies approve the plan.

Fukushima Prefecture Governor Yuhei Sato and the prefectural assembly have repeatedly called for all the reactors to be scrapped.

The chief of the utility's Fukushima headquarters, Yoshiyuki Ishizaki, said he wants to discuss the issue with the towns. But he said the firm is unable to reach a conclusion now because it must weigh both local views and the nation's energy policy.

"A strange sense of déjà vu"?

August 31, 2013

Japan's nuclear comedy just goes on and on **

by Jake Adelstein

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/08/31/national/japans-nuclear-comedy-just-goes-on-and-on/#.UiIw339Sb9k>

*What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.*
— Ecclesiastes 1:9

These words are said to have been penned by King Solomon around 3,000 years ago. Perhaps they were an augury of Japan's nuclear industry. I'm sure somewhere there's an original text that reads, "In the Land of the Melting Sun."

Here's the basic pattern: **An accident occurs in Japan's nuclear industry; those in charge fail to deal with it well; people suffer; those in charge lie to the public; finally they admit it and apologize profusely. Then the cycle is repeated.**

The latest revelations of leaks from at least one of more than 1,000 storage tanks being used to store radiation-contaminated water at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) are really nothing new; it's just another in a series of follies being handled in an irresponsible and short-sighted way.

True to form, while the media had been reporting on the problem for weeks, Tepco had denied it. Finally — and oddly, just after July's Upper House elections — there was the admission, the obligatory apology, and an announcement by the Japanese government that it would come to the rescue.

They say those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it — yet the patterns of mishaps in Japan's nuclear industry that I write about are so reproducible as to give me a strange sense of *déjà vu*. We have been here before.

The explosions and meltdowns of three reactors at Tepco's Fukushima facility in March 2011, leading to massive leaks of radiation, comprised the world's worst nuclear disaster since a reactor exploded at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the USSR (present-day Ukraine) in April 1986. In the northeastern Tohoku region of Honshu, where the Fukushima plant is located, more than 100,000 people have been forced to evacuate due to high radiation levels and the cleanup will likely take at least 40 years.

Tepco at first blamed the accident on "an unforeseen massive tsunami" triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. Then it admitted it had in fact foreseen just such a scenario but hadn't done anything about it.

A Special Diet Commission reporting in July 2012, and other studies, concluded that the earthquake alone probably damaged the cooling system of the Fukushima plant's 40-year-old Reactor 1 so badly that, even before the tsunami, meltdown was inevitable because it would overheat so much.

In other words, some of Japan's nuclear power plants may be unable to withstand an earthquake. Not a comforting thought in a country that has constant seismic activity.

Of course, "nuclear meltdown" itself was denied for months. Even up to May 2011, while the foreign media had long labeled the Fukushima disaster "a triple meltdown," Tepco — and the national government — stonewalled, insisting that meltdown had not been confirmed.

Then finally, just a week before members of an International Atomic Energy Agency investigation team were to arrive in Japan, the government and Tepco admitted the facts — with the usual ritual apologies.

The current leakage problems at the Fukushima plant are even more baffling to those of us blessed with a memory. That's because, in December 2011, the government announced that the plant had reached "a state of cold shutdown." Normally, that means radiation releases are under control and the temperature of its nuclear fuel is consistently below boiling point. Great! Mission accomplished! Let's go home.

Unfortunately, though, if Tepco stops pumping coolant into the reactors to keep their temperature down, then they won't be in "a state of cold shutdown" anymore.

And thanks to the haphazard cleanup at the plant, even just a few rats can jeopardize that shutdown. Yes, rats — not Tepco executives, but real furry rodents.

The plant is being run on makeshift equipment and breakdowns are endemic. Among nearly a dozen serious problems since April this year there have been successive power outages, leaks of highly radioactive water from underground water pools — and a rat that chewed enough wires to short-circuit a switchboard, causing a power outage that interrupted cooling for nearly 30 hours. Later, the cooling system for a fuel-storage pool had to be switched off for safety checks when two dead rats were found in a transformer box. Perhaps there's a secret Tepco PR manual 101: When in doubt, blame the rats.

However, the words of a top Tepco exec should be of some comfort: "I wish to express regret for the recent cases of misconduct at our company, which eroded public confidence in the nuclear power industry. We will do everything ... to prevent similar incidents and to maintain safety. We will promote release of information in order to reassure the general public that we are making sincere efforts, and to convince them that 'Tepco is trustworthy' again."

All very well — but those remarks were made in 2003 by then Tepco Chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata after the company admitted to extensive falsifying of safety records for more than a decade. The coverups included dangerous problems in a number of its aging nuclear power plants.

At that time, the entire nuclear industry came under great scrutiny. Reform had come. And just to show lessons had been learned, there were further apologies in 2004, when five workers at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Mihama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture were scalded to death by steam leaking from a corroded pipe that hadn't been inspected since 1976. Well, **apologies are cheap; safety is expensive.**

Do you see the pattern? My guess is there is only one way to stop it, and that's to finally pull the plug on Japan's nuclear energy industry. We can only trust them to do one thing: place profits first, wreak havoc, lie about it and then apologize. But I don't think that works so well anymore.

Investigative journalist Jake Adelstein is the author of "Tokyo Vice," a board member of Polaris Project Japan and a contributor to The Atlantic Wire and japansubculture.com. His email address is jakeadelstein@me.com.

Naoto Kan on nukes

August 31, 2013

Naoto Kan speaks out

Japan's prime minister at the time of the nation's worst postwar disaster tells Edan Corkill about his political principles, his mistakes and his ongoing anti-nuclear mission — as well as what really happened, and might have happened, in the dark days of March 2011

by Edan Corkill
Staff Writer

Naoto Kan took his first steps in the world of politics around 40 years ago as a pugnacious citizen-activist, admonishing those with power as only those without it can. Though he likes to say he's the same man now, of course there's an irony in that. After all, in the intervening years he acquired about as much power as an elected official in Japan can hope for — the prime ministership — and the timing of his tenure, coinciding with the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, and the ongoing nuclear crisis that followed, will ensure he remains one of Japan's most talked about leaders for many years to come.

Kan, who as a member of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) served as prime minister between June 2010 and September 2011, was born into a well-to-do family in Honshu's far western Yamaguchi Prefecture in 1946.

Influenced by his engineer father, as a young man he studied applied physics at Tokyo Institute of Technology where, like many students of the day, he was quickly swept up in the protest movements of the late 1960s and '70s.

One of the key points of dissatisfaction for the politically awakened Kan was a wave of scandals then beginning to sully the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which had held power in Japan since 1955.

Such was Kan's drive that in 1974, at age 27, he helped orchestrate the return to politics of Fusae Ichikawa, an iconic figure then in her 80s who had campaigned for women's suffrage before World War II, and then played a role in securing it afterward. The success of their campaign — in which they pledged to clean up politics — helped convince Kan that he, too, had a role to play in the Diet.

After his first campaign as an independent — in 1976 — ended in failure, Kan began working with like-minded politicians to forge parties they hoped would someday be able to topple the LDP. While Kan himself succeeded in winning a seat in the Lower House in 1980, realizing his and his colleagues' larger goal of defeating the LDP was to be a long and complex process — one that at times came to resemble a quick-tempo square-dance of political alliances and coalitions.

In one iteration, a party called the Socialist Democratic Federation that Kan had helped establish joined with seven other opposition parties — including a breakaway group from the LDP — to install one of their own in the prime minister's office. That was the famed but unwieldy coalition government of Morihiro Hosokawa which, though it ousted the LDP from power for the first time in 38 years, lasted just eight months, through April 1994.

In 1996, in another iteration, Kan — by then a member of the New Party Sakigake — actually joined in a coalition government with the LDP. For his and his party's cooperation, Kan was rewarded with his first Cabinet post, that of health and welfare minister.

It was while occupying that office that Kan first demonstrated a knack for ruffling feathers in very public settings. The former-citizen-activist wasted no time in exposing from the inside his ministry's culpability in a still-simmering 1980s scandal involving HIV-tainted blood products. As a result, more than 1,000 victims were able to secure settlements from the government.

Still, Kan's first Cabinet stint came to an end in November 1996, around the same time he decided to distance himself from the LDP by joining up with a young politician named Yukio Hatoyama to create the organization that two years later would become the Democratic Party of Japan. It wasn't until 2009 that he got another taste of power, this time when the DPJ finally defeated the LDP in a general election landslide.

Hatoyama, who was then serving as DPJ head, became prime minister first, but Kan got his turn the following June — just nine months before the nation's worst postwar disaster.

Late last year, Kan published a book about the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011, and the ensuing crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco). What becomes clear in the pages of "Toden Fukushima Genpatsu Jiko Sori Daijin Toshite Kangaeta Koto" ("My Thoughts as Prime Minister on the Tepco Fukushima Nuclear Plant Accident") is that he approached the disasters in the same highly principled but somewhat impolitic way as he had the HIV-tainted-blood scandal.

Once the rattling stopped on that Friday afternoon, Kan's immediate concern was rescue and relief work for victims of the quake and, an hour later, the tsunami. Acutely conscious of the slow mobilization of the Self-Defense Forces following the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995, Kan acted swiftly, ordering the mobilization of 20,000 troops that night. Two days later he increased that to 100,000.

"Activating as many SDF personnel as quickly as possible was the single most important thing I, as prime minister, could do in response to the quake and tsunami," he said.

Kan's response to the nuclear crisis was inevitably more complex and — perhaps equally inevitably — more controversial.

As he explains in his book, there were two prime factors influencing his thinking. The first was that the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), the government body tasked with formulating responses to large-scale nuclear accidents, couldn't provide him with sufficient information upon which to make decisions.

Consequently, Kan felt he had to base the swiftly established nuclear emergency response headquarters close to hand, in the Prime Minister's Office. He also assumed a particularly hands-on role for himself in gathering information.

The second factor stemmed from the first. Without advice from the NISA, Kan started thinking to himself about how a worst-case scenario might end up involving the evacuation of Tokyo — a hunch he says was given scientific backing on March 25 when Japan Atomic Energy Commission chairman Shunsuke Kondo presented him with a similar scenario.

If that had happened, said Kan, "the effect on the nation would have been akin to a war."

Such fears informed many of Kan's early decisions — in particular his controversial "storming" of Tepco's Tokyo headquarters on March 15 in response to reports the company intended to pull all their staff out of the Fukushima facility.

That action, and many of his other decisions during and after the crisis, form the subject of a frank interview Kan gave to The Japan Times earlier this month at his Diet office. He also reflected more generally on his career to date and shared his now fervent opposition to nuclear power — a technology he believes is doomed to obsolescence.

[...]

Given your interest in science, I'd like to ask you about your sense of responsibility for the failures that laid the groundwork for the March 2011 nuclear crisis: The fact that the so-called "myth of the safety of nuclear power" had become so entrenched; why Tepco had not been forced to mitigate against a massive tsunami; and the woeful inadequacy of the government's nuclear emergency manuals. As a prominent politician for 30 years, you must feel some responsibility.

When I first stood for election I was quite critical of nuclear power. The Socialist Democratic Federation's policy was that nuclear power was only a temporary source of energy. But as the party became larger and grew into the DPJ, the fact is that I, too, became influenced by the myth of nuclear power's safety.

Somewhere inside me I just believed that, with Japan's technological proficiency, an accident would not occur. I greatly regret that optimism now.

It was also a fact that from a certain time in Japan it became extremely difficult to criticize nuclear power. There was a real conglomeration of power around it — and not just inside the LDP, but in the opposition parties, the media and academia, too. This was the so-called nuclear village. I was pushed into submission by that. It really is a point of regret for me.

But it's because of that regret that, since March 11, 2011, I have been so vocal in saying that as a country we can do without nuclear power.

What was the single most important contribution you made in the response to the nuclear crisis?

In a fire or a natural disaster, when it gets really dangerous, you have the option of escaping and letting it burn out. But a nuclear accident is different. With a nuclear accident, running away and coming back later would make the problem exponentially worse.

Fukushima had six reactors at the No. 1 site, and four at the second (No. 2) site. It had 11 pools for storing used nuclear fuel. If all those had become uncontrollable, then there could have been many times more nuclear fallout than from Chernobyl. Radiation would have fallen over a very large area, including Tokyo — possibly requiring the evacuation of 50 million people. That would have dealt a massive blow to the country.

My responses were informed by this understanding of the risks involved. With so much at stake, I knew we had to do everything in our power to bring the reactors under control, even if it meant putting the lives of responders at risk.

Hence, when — on the morning of March 15 — I heard that Tepco wanted to evacuate the plant, I went to tell them that such a move was unacceptable. Of course I knew it was dangerous for people to be at the plant, but leaving it would have put many times more people in danger.

I told the Self-Defense Forces the same: They had to contain this even at risk to their own safety. The fire department was the same. I don't think my approach was wrong.

That visit to Tepco headquarters on March 15 attracted much criticism. People say you yelled and tried to micromanage the situation — and Tepco says they never intended to pull all their staff, but just to reduce it to a minimum. Importantly, though, you also created a joint command center between the government and Tepco, and in your book you say that from then on the responses became more coordinated. It seems obvious that creating a unified command center was the right thing to do. Why didn't you do it earlier?

There are laws that address nuclear accidents and name the departments that are supposed to deal with them. The laws state that, if a severe nuclear accident occurs, a nuclear emergency response headquarters is created and the prime minister becomes its head. The headquarters itself is to be managed by the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) — a body within the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Before becoming prime minister, I had done stints as health minister and finance minister. In both ministries there were many specialists — in finance or in health. In naming the NISA as the manager of this emergency committee, the law anticipated that it would take the lead in gathering the kind of information that would be necessary for the committee to make decisions.

We made the committee, but the NISA was unable to provide any information — not about what was happening at Tepco, nor at the plant — nothing. That is why I decided I had to gather information myself and why, on the morning of the 12th, I decided to visit the plant and talk directly with those in charge there.

March 15 was the same. According to the law, the on-site response to a nuclear disaster was to be managed by the power plant's operator. And in some ways, that is obvious — after all, it is their factory. But while the response at the plant was fine, Tepco's headquarters in Tokyo was not functioning properly.

So you say I should have gone earlier; well, if I had the benefit of hindsight, then yes, I would have gone earlier. But, if you look at the Three Mile Island accident (a partial reactor meltdown at that nuclear power plant in the U.S. state of Pennsylvania in 1979) and, in particular, at the Chernobyl disaster (in 1986), the response for the whole first week was an absolute panic.

From 2:46 p.m. on March 11 till 4:30 a.m. on March 15 — it took less than 100 hours for it to become clear that we needed to make a joint command center. Of course, if I had the benefit of hindsight I would have done it earlier.

Jumping forward a few months: As you started publicly voicing your reservations about nuclear power you became the target of severe criticism over your handling of the crisis. In fact, when 70 percent of the population supported phasing out nuclear power generation, and you were the most prominent politician who was actually agreeing with that sentiment, your support rate plummeted to just 17 percent. That seems paradoxical. How do you account for it?

I guess the fact is that the nuclear power policy and my own support rate were disconnected. The reasons I wanted to quit nuclear power were, for one, the fact that the risks involved had become so clear to me as a result of the crisis; and two, there was something that I already understood: We could get by without relying on nuclear power. I knew there were viable alternatives.

But I failed to convey those two messages to the public. The message that got out through the media was all negative — that Kan made the nuclear accident worse, that he was delaying the recovery.

What I find more worrying, though, is that even after that crisis there were still 30 or 40 percent of the population who supported nuclear power.

It is men in particular who support nuclear power. Women seem not so keen, perhaps because they worry about children. The idea that nuclear power enabled Japan's economic development is deeply ingrained.

People also say Japan should keep nuclear power because the resulting plutonium has value in terms of security — that it acts as a nuclear deterrent. The Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper stated that in an editorial in September 2011.

That way of thinking has been around since the time nuclear power was first introduced into Japan. People like Prime Minister (Yasuhiro) Nakasone (in office 1982-87) were of that opinion, and so too are some members of the DPJ, even today.

As an opponent of nuclear power, how do you respond to their arguments?

Well, on the basis of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, a nuclear deterrent exists in the form of the American nuclear arsenal.

Japan is the only country to have suffered a nuclear attack, so in public almost everyone, including those in the LDP, say they want to rid the world of nuclear weapons. But in terms of guarding Japan's independence, some people think, even if they'd don't say so, that Japan should possess such weapons.

I actually think this problem is even more basic than politics. Nuclear war is something that destroys not countries but mankind itself. But politicians have to make up their minds. I believe that Japan's security issues are covered by the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Others, like [prominent nationalist politician] Shintaro Ishihara, believe Japan should possess nuclear weapons.

In June 2011 you faced a binding no-confidence motion in the Diet and, in response, you promised to resign, but only after the the passing of a law that would oblige utilities to buy energy from people producing it from renewable sources — the feed-in tariffs (FIT) system. Has that law had the effect you hoped for?

Ending our reliance on nuclear power was going to require two things — quitting use of and dispensing with the power plants themselves and also securing alternative energy sources.

So getting renewable energy up to a level where it can meaningfully supplement nuclear power was important. The FIT law was passed in August 2011, I believe, and came into effect in July 2012, and it is having a big effect. This year, it seems, Japan will have the fastest level of growth in solar power energy generation in the world.

As an opponent of nuclear power, you were placing a lot of faith in one law.

Well yes, but that was just half the story. The other half was actually ridding the country of nuclear power. And, to be honest, there was more I wanted to do on that front. What I really wanted to do was to take

nuclear power generation away from the private utilities — in particular Tepco. But, in the midst of the political machinations, the most I could do was the feed-in tariffs system. I think it has had a big impact.

The other part was carried on by (Prime Minister Yoshihiko) Noda [Kan's successor], and he succeeded in creating the Nuclear Regulatory Agency (NRA), and so on. I think that fight will continue.

Will it? That seems unlikely under the LDP.

On the domestic political front, sure, we are certainly going backwards, but if you look at the tendencies around the world, the world itself is moving in the same direction as me.

For example, in June I participated in a talk organized by opponents of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (in California). Two days after that symposium it was decided that the plant would be decommissioned.

The reason they quit that power plant was not just because of the opposition movement, but also because cheaper alternatives have emerged — shale gas and so on. Nuclear power is actually expensive, especially if you think about disposal of the used fuel.

The countries that are currently trying to make nuclear power plants are not doing it because it is cheap. They either want plutonium, for security, or they want energy independence — if they were to buy natural gas from Russia, they would be controlled by Russia. The motivation is political, not economic.

The other point to make about Japan's domestic situation is that **we have yet to see whether the NRA will assert itself**. It is currently investigating whether or not an active fault runs beneath (Kansai Electric Power Co.'s) Oi nuclear power plant (in Fukui Prefecture). They are saying that if a positive finding emerges they will stop the plant. But will they be able to stick to their guns or will they buckle under political pressure?

What do you make of the current problems of radiation-contaminated water leaking into the Pacific Ocean?

When the plant was constructed back in the late 1960s they actually excavated a bluff so that they could build it lower down and closer to the sea's level. It is a site where groundwater naturally seeps from the mountains and into the sea.

So the risk of what's happening now was recognized early on (after the March 2011 events), and I instructed the joint crisis headquarters to consider a suggestion that subterranean walls be built down to the bedrock around the plant. But Tepco decided that was going to be too expensive, and opted only to build a wall on the seaward side. [Construction began in October 2011.] What's happening now demonstrates that this piecemeal approach was insufficient.

Now the proposal is to make a wall of frozen soil around the plant, which will apparently be cheaper because underground utilities going into the plant — cables and so forth — will not have to be severed.

You have said you are going to work to achieve a Japan that is not reliant on nuclear power. What concrete moves will you actually make?

As I said at the outset, I was **an activist** to begin with. I created a political party and eventually achieved a change in the administration. Now I have returned to my roots, really. Going and speaking in California like that is a form of activism.

I've also been invited to go and talk in Taiwan. So in that way, across a broad front, I will continue to be active to achieve the scrapping of nuclear power.

I really look forward to creating an international network in this field. At the same time, I want to work to promote green industries. Japan is good at those.

August 31, 2013

Export of nukes "shameful"

September 6, 2013

Source : Japan Daily Press

<http://japandailynews.com/anti-nuclear-mayor-calls-govt-export-of-nuclear-power-unethical-shameful-0635462/>

Anti-nuclear mayor calls gov't export of nuclear power 'unethical', 'shameful'

The outgoing mayor of Tokaimura in Ibaraki Prefecture, considered to be the town that pioneered Japan's nuclear development, blasted the administration's move to continually push the export of nuclear technology and infrastructure, calling it "unethical" and "shameful". He cited the still unresolved problem at Fukushima as reason enough to stop championing nuclear power.

Tatsuya Murakami, who is already on his fourth four-year term as mayor of Tokaimura and will not run for re-election, believes Japan is not qualified to export the infrastructure since the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima in 2011 is proof enough that the technology is unstable and that Japan's "overconfidence and egotism" was their undoing. He referred to several statements before that said nuclear accidents like those at Three Mile Island in the United States in 1979 and Chernobyl in 1986 will never happen in Japan. He strongly believes that Japan should not be entitled to operate nuclear plants, even more export it.

He also criticized the fact that the government is not listening to the public in pursuing their nuclear agenda, claiming that more than half of Japan is in favor of scrapping nuclear power already. Murakami even sees some parallels in Japan's history when during World War II, the country's failure to make a policy shift to end the war "brought about tragedies in Okinawa, Hiroshima and Nagasaki." He fears that the road the government is taking will lead to a "self-destruction" once again.

Tokaimura called itself the "village of atomic energy" because Japan's first research reactor reached criticality here in 1957. An accident at the JCO Co however in 1999 killed two workers and exposed hundreds of residents to radiation.

The Fukushima incident in 2011 has no deaths directly connected with it, but experts have said the effects of the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl is still unknown at this time but will take decades for the plant to be decontaminated. Further aggravating the problem is the fact that the capability of the operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co (TEPCO), to carry out the clean-up process is constantly being called into question.

[via Global Post]

A2-B-C by Ian Thomas Ash ("In the Grey Zone")

September 9, 2013

Filmmaker revisits the children of Fukushima's 'Grey Zone'

After documenting post-3/11 chaos, Ash returns to find families fearful, angry over radioactive legacy

by Louise George Kittaka
Special To The Japan Times

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2013/09/09/issues/filmmaker-revisits-the-children-of-fukushimas-grey-zone/#.Ui4lXX9Sb9k>

For independent filmmaker Ian Thomas Ash, making documentaries is an organic process. “I’m not a journalist, and I don’t try to make judgments,” he says. “My reaction is to film what is going on around me and see where it leads.”

In Ash’s case, it has led to recognition and awards at film festivals around the world for “A2-B-C,” the second of a pair of documentaries about children living in towns a stone’s throw from the site of the nuclear reactor meltdowns in Fukushima Prefecture.

Ash, an American who has called Japan home for the past 10 years, was in Tokyo when the massive earthquake struck on March 11, 2011. He began by simply filming scenes around him, such as the panic buying and *setsuden* electricity-saving measures, little knowing this would become the prologue to a much bigger story.

Wanting to find out more, Ash lost no time in getting a ride up to Tohoku with some rescue workers, arriving 10 days after the meltdown. “Then I read a story in The Japan Times about a school re-opening just outside the 30 km zone around the nuclear plant. Kids who had been evacuated from within the 20 to 30 km zone were going to be bused there. I wondered how that was going to work.”

Upon returning to Tokyo, Ash contacted Colin O’Neill, a cameraman and producer in the U.K. who had worked with Ash on two previous films. At a time when many foreign nationals were fleeing the country, O’Neill flew over to Japan to lend his support. “We still had no idea of what was going to come of it, whether a short video or a feature film.”

Ash and O’Neill ended up in the town of Minamisoma, filming and living among people in the 20-30 km zone who were under government orders to remain inside as much as possible at the time. “These were people in the gray zone,” Ash explains. “They were not being compensated by the government to evacuate, and couldn’t afford to leave on their own. They were mostly farmers.”

It was this idea of living in a state of flux, a shadowy world when nothing was certain, that gave rise to the title of the resulting documentary, “In the Grey Zone.”

Having arrived with no connections whatsoever in the area, Ash and O’Neill made a beeline for the city office, which was operating a resource center for residents coming in to file claims for assistance, among other things. They obtained a list of businesses that had reopened and soon found themselves at a gas station, asking the owner if they could interview her. When it began to rain heavily, the woman invited the pair inside and introduced them to her son, a father of four. Upon hearing about their mission, he invited Ash and O’Neill to stay with his family and film them.

“This all happened on only our second day. It’s how I approach all my films. I don’t do a lot of research or make a lot of plans before I go somewhere,” Ash explains. “This first family ended up being in the film and, in turn, they introduced us to their friends, creating a strong basis for the project.”

When children are the subjects of a project like this, it may be tempting to focus on one particular boy or girl, inadvertently turning them into a poster child for the group. Ash says he was careful not to identify any of the children as belonging to a certain family in the film. “The children [in the film] are the representatives of all those in the same situation in Fukushima. I don’t want viewers to get attached to one particular child. I wanted to give them all a voice.”

The story is continued in “A2-B-C,” a sequel of sorts to “In the Grey Zone,” depicting children in Fukushima 18 months later.

This is not the first time that Ash has revisited the subjects of one of his films. He completed his first major documentary in 2006, “The Ballad of Vicki and Jake,” about the ups and downs of an atypical British family. After watching his film, audiences often asked for updates on the family, leading to a sequel (“Jake, Not Finished Yet,” 2010), also filmed and produced by O’Neill.

However, even Ash himself was surprised at how quickly “A2-B-C” gained momentum. “I guess I always knew I would make a follow-up film, but I didn’t expect it to be quite so soon.” “In the Grey Zone” had its world premiere at the Rhode Island International Film Festival in 2012, with “A2-B-C” following in its footsteps, making its North American debut at the same festival last month.

When he began hearing about an apparent increase in throat nodules and cysts among children in Fukushima, he knew this was a story that had to be told. There is an added urgency this time, since “A2-B-C” depicts the grassroots efforts of mothers in Fukushima to give a voice to their children and their worries for their future. Fathers are largely absent from the film, but not because they didn’t share their wives’ concern, Ash points out. Most were simply too busy keeping their heads down and working to support their families.

The film’s title comes from the medical classifications for the size and number of throat nodules and cysts, but the film deals with more than just worries about the risk of thyroid cancer among families in the region. “The film covers other health and environmental issues, such as our inability to decontaminate the area. People have low white blood cell counts, and both children and adults are experiencing more nosebleeds and rashes. Not to mention the constant stress they live with.”

Since the second film has a layer of controversy that was largely absent from the first, Ash was fully aware that it might be harder to persuade people to appear on camera. “In the case of ‘In the Grey Zone,’ nobody ever questioned our right to be there. It was just such a chaotic time. Things were rather different when I filmed ‘A2-B-C.’ “

To date, he has never resorted to using voice distortion or mosaics over faces for his interview subjects, although he won’t rule it out completely for future projects. “Overall — surprisingly — I haven’t had much trouble finding people willing to talk. And, sometimes, it is easier to apologize afterward than ask permission,” he adds with a wry smile.

In May the film had its world premiere at the Nippon Connection Film Festival in Frankfurt, the world’s largest festival of Japanese movies outside this country. “Even just being there was major. They show movies from across the spectrum — one of Beat Takeshi’s was there.”

It was a surreal moment for the filmmaker when he was presented with the Nippon Visions Award for the best film by a new Japan-based director, becoming the first-ever non-Japanese winner. “When they announced my name, I was in shock,” he admits. “I didn’t think that a topic like mine would be recognized.”

After the screening, audience members shared their reactions to what they had just seen, which Ash filmed and posted on his YouTube channel. Particularly poignant was the following message to the mothers of Fukushima, from a young woman from Chernobyl who was 2 at the time of the disastrous nuclear accident in 1986: “I want to say it’s not wrong to care about your own children. Don’t believe what people say when your feelings say it isn’t right. I think it’s OK to ask about the things being hidden and to be angry and worried about the safety and future of your own child.”

Invitations to show “A2-B-C” have been coming in thick and fast from film festivals around the world, including at the Raindance Film Festival in the U.K. (Sept. 25 to Oct. 6) and the United Nations Association Film Festival in the U.S. (Oct. 17-27). Ash is both humbled by the nod to his work and grateful for the opportunity to gain international attention for families in Fukushima.

Despite the buzz being created by “A2-B-C,” Ash is continuing to move in new directions, with his newest movie slated for release in early 2014. “Minus1287” follows four years in the life of Kazuko, an elderly woman who is a personal friend of Ash’s.

When asked if he purposefully seeks out those marginalized in society — children, the elderly — for his documentaries, he shakes his head. “Not really, although I have realized I have an empathy with them. With kids, I don’t see them as my kids as such — I think of them more as my brothers and sisters in life.

"As citizens, we believe that the government has our best interests at heart. But that isn't always the case. The turning point for me was Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. Those who could leave did. It was the vulnerable ones who were left behind — the elderly, the poor, the sick. And now a similar situation is occurring in Fukushima."

"A2-B-C" will be shown in Tokyo on Sept. 14 as part of the Pia Film Festival and next month at the Yamagata Documentary International Film Festival. Ash hopes that people will take the opportunity to view his film and think carefully about the implications.

"There is no resolution at the end of my film. This could happen to any of us. We need to become active participants in government policy and understand what is happening."

Ian's website: www.documentingian.com. Pia Film Festival: pff.jp/35th/lineup/howto01.html (in Japanese) and www.pff.jp/english/2013/09/35th-pia-film-festival-1.html (in English). "A2-B-C" will also be screened at 10 a.m. on Oct. 12 at the Yamagata Museum of Art as part of the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival. Send your comments and story ideas to community@japantimes.co.jp

Asahi poll on Gov't response to water leak

September 9, 2013

ASAHI POLL: 72% criticize government's response to Fukushima radioactive water leak issue

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201309090090>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Seventy-two percent of respondents in an Asahi Shimbun poll said the Abe administration's response to leaks of radioactive water at the wrecked Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant was "late."

This compared with 15 percent who answered it was "early."

The administration announced Sept. 3 that the central government will take responsibility by spending at least 47 billion yen (\$473 million) to deal with tons of radiation-contaminated water flowing daily from the plant into the sea.

Plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. acknowledged a leak from a storage tank in July.

For the survey, The Asahi Shimbun contacted 3,496 voters by telephone on Sept. 7-8. There were 1,925 valid responses, accounting for 55 percent of the total.

The respondents were also asked whether they feel the government should take the lead in tackling this growing problem, and 89 percent answered "yes."

When asked to pick one option among four in regard to the gravity of the problem, 95 percent of respondents answered it is "serious." Of that number, 72 percent said "very much" and 23 percent said "to some degree."

The poll also looked at other issues.

With regard to scheduled increases in the consumption tax rate from the current 5 percent to 8 percent in April 2014 and to 10 percent in October 2015, 39 percent of respondents expressed support for the action while 52 percent did not.

After taking economic factors into account, Abe is expected to announce in early October whether he will go ahead with the tax increase.

When asked if they will try to hold down daily expenses if the consumption tax rate rises to 8 percent next April, 65 percent said "yes." This compared with 29 percent who said "no."

Another issue that is much in the public mind concerns the territorial dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

Marking the first anniversary of the Japanese government's decision to purchase three of the inhabited islands from a private owner and make them state property, respondents were asked if they agreed with the decision.

Fifty-six percent of respondents approved and 24 percent expressed their disapproval.

The islands off Okinawa Prefecture are known as the Diaoyu Islands in China.

The respondents were asked to pick one option among four with regard to the degree of soured Japan-China relations due to the Senkaku Island issue. Thirty-two percent and 50 percent answered that this is a "serious problem" and a "sort of problem," respectively. Thirteen percent and 3 percent said that it is "not much of a problem" and "not a problem at all," respectively.

The support rate for the Cabinet led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was 57 percent, whereas the non-support rate was 24 percent.

T

"Team Abe is now on the job." But who is it running for?

September 7, 2013

Don't worry: Team Abe is tackling the nuclear crisis at Fukushima

by Jeff Kingston

Special To The Japan Times

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/09/07/commentary/dont-worry-team-abe-is-tackling-the-nuclear-crisis-at-fukushima/#at_pco=tcb-1.0&at_ab=-&at_pos=1&at_tot=8

Even if the public remains overwhelmingly skeptical about nuclear safety in general, and anxious in particular about the impact of the ongoing crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant on the environment, there is reassuring news that we can now rest easy.

In short, after spending its eight months in power studiously averting its eyes from the gathering troubles some 200 km north of Tokyo, Team Abe is now on the job. But can it deliver? The stakes are very high.

Earlier this year, Abe's environment ministry dealt with nuclear risks by deleting mention of them from its 2013 White Paper. While the 2012 White Paper termed radioactive contamination the nation's "biggest environmental issue," a year later the risk just vanished. But the hapless efforts of Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) are a powerful reminder that it's not quite so easy.

The recent cascade of revelations about radioactive water seeping here and there exposes serious risks and shortcomings, but it is quite likely that more bad news is coming. Nuclear shills endlessly bleat on about how science shows that public concerns about Fukushima are ridiculous hysteria. The only real worry, they say, is worrying.

However, among those “hysterical” citizens there number some 150,000 people who remain displaced from their homes, thousands of farmers and fishermen in Fukushima Prefecture who can no longer earn a living and young women who wonder if, given the radiation stigma, they will ever marry — and whether they should bear children.

What about those massive releases of radioactive water into the ocean? In terms of radiation, they’re about as threatening as 76 million bananas — according to one nuclear advocate. But are they as tasty? At least now we can tell Koreans, who lambast Japan for spewing radiation into the ocean, to vent on the Philippines, Asia’s biggest banana exporter.

So why didn’t Japanese scientists give the nuclear industry and government regulators a red card instead of propagating the myth of 100-percent safety prior to Fukushima? These paragons of knowledge and objective insight showed themselves to be timid careerists who didn’t want to jeopardize their jobs or research funding. Those few who did raise their hands were booted out of the nuclear village and paid for their apostasy; why didn’t their colleagues rally to their defense? So scores of coopted scientists went along with the string of lies and told the emperor that all was well; it took a tsunami-sized mirror to reveal that he’d been naked all along.

Haruki Madarame, former chairman of the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC), testified in February 2012 at a Diet inquiry that the ace scientists who were supposed to be regulating the nuclear industry sat around making up excuses why Japan didn’t need to adopt more stringent international safety standards.

Although Japan is renowned for its leading-edge technologies, its nuclear-safety czar acknowledged that on nuclear safety it lagged far behind. Madarame also revealed that when power companies didn’t want to obey regulators’ demands, they just ignored them with impunity. Had Tepco installed the multiple-backup power systems his colleagues recommended back in the early 1990s, there might not have been an outage and blackout at the Fukushima plant following the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011 — and so, no meltdowns. Oops.

Tepco had its own team of crack scientists, but little good that did; they produced the June 2012 report that exonerated Tepco of all wrongdoing in the Fukushima debacle. Ironically, though, that scientific whitewash was so lame that even Tepco subsequently repudiated it and issued a mea culpa; guilty as charged. Progress?

Amazingly, almost all of Japan’s utilities admitted to falsifying maintenance and repair data for their reactors over an extended period of time. A lot of scientists had to sign off on those deliberate fabrications.

The scientific establishment, whose assessments we are asked to now trust, mimicked the three wise monkeys: See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. And this ethos facilitated Japan's Chernobyl.

A significant regulatory revamp in 2013 targets lax safety standards, poor industry oversight and widespread concerns about operating nuclear plants in quake-prone Japan. In September 2012, the discredited Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) and the NSC were disbanded and replaced by the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) with a staff of 480 under the environment ministry. But the NRA is more a reorganization than a significant reform, as 460 of its staff were transferred from the NISA and NSC. Thus the same regulators who were working in favor of the nuclear village are still in charge.

Can the NRA nurture a culture of safety and crack the whip on the powerful utilities? The new nuclear-safety czar, Shunichi Tanaka, recently stated that the NRA's top priority is the safety of reactors, not the operator's bottom line. Perhaps, but then why did the NRA allow Tepco to cut corners on decommissioning work that compromised safety and led to extensive radioactive contamination pouring into the ocean? Are other cash-strapped utilities also shortchanging safety?

Tanaka is credited with compiling new safety guidelines that came into effect in July 2013 — but whether they prove effective in upgrading safety at Japan's nuclear power plants depends on compliance.

Problematically, the new safety upgrades — ranging from remote command centers to backup power supplies, higher sea walls and venting filters — focus on hardware. The lessons of Fukushima, however, suggest there's also a pressing need to upgrade basic worker training and crisis-management skills while nurturing a culture of safety — there are no quick fixes.

Moreover, though evacuation zones now extend to a 30-km radius around nuclear plants, local authorities and utilities remain woefully unprepared for an emergency.

The NRA's provisional safety assessment in June of the reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture is instructive regarding the prospects of improving safety practices in an industry that is used to getting its way.

Finding no urgent problems, the NRA allowed the Oi reactors to remain online until their scheduled shutdown this month. But it is worrying that the plant's operator, Kansai Electric Power Co., did not fully cooperate with the NRA and dragged its feet on complying with the NRA's request for a seismic simulation.

Elsewhere, the NRA has determined that an active fault runs directly beneath the No. 2 reactor building at the Tsuruga nuclear power plant, also in Fukui Prefecture, and recommends against restarting it. This decision has been challenged by the plant's operator, Japan Atomic Power Co., which insists its own scientists know better.

Meanwhile, the nuclear village is ratcheting up the pressure on the NRA to reconsider its recommendation, knowing the government is in its pocket.

In July, based on the new safety guidelines, four utilities applied to restart a total of 10 reactors nationwide. Approval looks likely, despite the Fukushima fiasco, so setting the stage for restarts in 2014.

But can the NRA reform an industry in which lowly Tepco once had the best reputation — and one in which deceit and coverup have been the standard operating procedures?

After all, utilities can rely on favorable assessments by the best scientists money can buy — and the nuclear village now has Team Abe championing its cause. That is precisely why everyone has a right to be worried.

Jeff Kingston is Director of Asian Studies, Temple University Japan.

"Cheers and jeers"

September 16, 2013

Cheers and jeers over Oi reactor shutdown

September 16, 2013

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201309160078>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

For the first time in 14 months, not a single nuclear reactor is operating in Japan. For anti-nuclear activists, it is the development they have been clamoring for.

But those who work in the nuclear industry are far from happy. And then there are entrepreneurs of renewable energy sources who have their own take on the situation.

The last time no nuclear reactors were operating was between May 5 and July 1, 2012.

The No. 4 reactor at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture was taken offline Sept. 15 for routine inspections. Until then, it was the only reactor that was up and running.

Jun Yokoyama braved heavy rains from a typhoon to distribute anti-nuclear fliers in the Nakanoshima district of Osaka on the day the reactor was switched off.

"Power demand was met this summer with only two nuclear reactors (at the Oi plant) online," the 29-year-old Kobe University graduate student said. "There is no need for 50 reactors across Japan."

Yokoyama is one of the organizers of monthly protest rallies that started in March 2012 outside Kansai Electric's head office in Osaka.

Initially, only five people turned up. But the number swelled to more than 2,000 by the time the previous administration, led by the Democratic Party of Japan, reactivated the two Oi nuclear reactors in July of last year.

"I believed back then that a surge in the number of protesters could stop nuclear power generation," Yokoyama said.

But that was before the pro-nuclear Liberal Democratic Party regained power following a landslide win in the Lower House election last December. It again emerged victorious in July's Upper House election to cement its power.

The current administration led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says it will approve restarts of nuclear reactors that are confirmed safe by regulatory authorities.

Only 200 or so people now take part in the monthly protests.

"Chants of no-nukes won't change anything," Yokoyama said. "We need to share issues that nuclear proponents also have to face, such as what to do with spent fuel, and seek a gradual phase-out."

Yokoyama's native community in Mie Prefecture is blessed with stunning natural scenery, but is plagued by an exodus of inhabitants. Local opposition has thwarted plans to build a nuclear plant in a neighboring town.

Last month, he noted beautifully constructed roads in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, home to a nuclear plant. "Cash flows into communities that host nuclear facilities, but then they are no longer able to make decisions on their own," Yokoyama said. "I disapprove of turning to nuclear plants as a way to revitalize local economies."

But in one community that hosts a nuclear power plant, the 47-year-old operator of a printing firm in Kashiwazaki, Niigata Prefecture, offers a different point of view.

He said he has pinned his last hopes on Abe's promise to restart nuclear reactors once they have been confirmed to be safe.

For the past 30 years or so, his small company has been printing documents and other materials for Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant and its subcontractors.

Sales plummeted to about 60 percent of peak levels after the last of the seven nuclear reactors at the plant went offline in March 2012, obliging the firm to part with one of its three printing presses. The company has only eight employees.

It was the moment the printer realized he needed to find new clients outside of the nuclear community.

He made the rounds of potential customers, sometimes 20 or more a day, without an appointment in the hope of winning bulk orders as TEPCO used to place.

"That was the moment I faced reality," he said. "I realized the difficulty of living without the nuclear plant."

In Fukushima Prefecture, site of the nuclear disaster that was the catalyst for the continuing controversy over Japan's atomic energy policy, however, a group of entrepreneurs has embarked on energy self-sufficiency.

A solar power plant with 192 panels is located in a mountainous district of Iwaki, some 35 kilometers south of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The photovoltaic panels were installed by the Iwaki Otento SUN business association, which was set up in the aftermath of the nuclear disaster.

"We are keen to generate renewable energy precisely because we have experienced the nuclear disaster," said Morihiko Shimamura, the 55-year-old secretary-general of the association.

Shimamura, who runs a housing construction and sales company in Iwaki, said that prior to the nuclear accident he generally accepted there was a need for nuclear power plants, not least because his clients included TEPCO employees who worked at such facilities. But the disaster sharply changed his views.

"I was up to my neck in the myth that nuclear power was safe," Shimamura said. "But humans cannot coexist with nuclear power plants."

He deplored the loss of a post-disaster public eagerness to save energy in the nation's neon-lit cities.

"I wonder what the Japanese public learned from the nuclear accident," Shimamura said.

(Shintaro Egawa and Kohei Tomida contributed to this article.)

Antinuke protesters in Tokyo

September 15, 2013

Anti-nuke protesters call for end to nuclear energy use

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201309150018>

By SATORU OGAWA/ Staff Writer

Thousands of anti-nuclear demonstrators rallied in Tokyo on Sept. 14, a day before Kansai Electric Power Co. was scheduled to shut down operations at the only nuclear power plant now online.

An estimated 9,000 protesters called for an extension of conditions under which Japan is not dependent in the least on nuclear energy.

The No. 4 reactor of the Oi nuclear power plant is scheduled to go offline late on Sept. 15 for a regular inspection. That would mean that all 50 reactors in Japan are idle.

The demonstrators gathered at the Kameido Chuo Park on Sept. 14 and later marched close to JR Kinshicho Station as well as in the vicinity of Tokyo Skytree, the landmark broadcasting tower that draws hordes of tourists.

One of the speakers at the gathering was Katsumi Hasegawa, who evacuated from Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, to Fujinomiya, Shizuoka Prefecture, with his wife and child.

"I became aware of the fact that humans will never be able to exist beside radiation after having seen it pollute my child's future," Hasegawa said.

Other participants at the gathering included Nobel Prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe and noted author Keiko Ochiai.

By SATORU OGAWA/ Staff Writer

September 15, 2013

Some 8,000 march in Tokyo against restart of any nuclear power plants

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130915p2g00m0dm013000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- An estimated 8,000 people took to the streets Saturday in Tokyo to protest against the resumption of any nuclear power plants, as the only operating reactor was set to be shutdown the next day, leaving none functioning for the second time since the Fukushima disaster in 2011.

On Sunday, a reactor at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture, western Japan -- the country's sole operating reactor since earlier this month -- will be taken offline for a routine checkup, leaving all of the country's 50 commercial reactors suspended for the first time in about 14 months.

But as the country's nuclear regulators are considering whether some nuclear power plants are safe enough to resume operating, demonstrators marched through streets in the capital's Koto Ward and nearby areas after attending an anti-nuclear rally organized by Nobel literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe. "We want to keep telling what is happening at Fukushima even though everybody is talking about the Olympics," Oe told the protest rally. "Let's hand down an environment in which children can live without fear."

Another speaker, the writer Keiko Ochiai, posed a question about Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's remark last week to the International Olympic Committee, just before it voted to grant the 2020 Summer Olympics to Tokyo, saying of Fukushima that "the situation is under control."

"Can you say the situation is under control even though contaminated water keeps leaking?" Ochiai asked. As an evacuee from Fukushima Prefecture, Katsumi Hasegawa, whose family has voluntarily moved from the city of Koriyama outside the evacuation zone to a city in Shizuoka Prefecture near Mt. Fuji, said, "With the future of my children tainted, I have realized that radiation and human beings cannot coexist."

Halting of the Oi plant's No. 4 reactor on Sunday follows the shutdown of the plant's No. 3 reactor on Sept. 2 for checkups. Their reactivation in July last year ended a two-month period when Japan had no nuclear power supply for the first time in more than 40 years in the aftermath of the March 2011 reactor meltdowns at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi plant.

Beyond Nuclear: sign the petition

September 12, 2013

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/home/2013/9/12/urgent-call-for-help-at-fukushima-sign-petition.html>

Urgent call for help at Fukushima. Sign petition!

Concern is growing internationally not only at the apparently worsening situation at the stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors — where hundreds of tons of radioactive water pour into the sea daily — but at the Japanese government's lack of focus in dealing with the on-going catastrophe.

Internationally, there is an increasingly more urgent call for Japan to invite and accept help from independent experts to deal with the leaking radioactive waste storage tanks at the site, and the complex

challenge to divert the flow of ground water around, rather than through, the contaminated complex. (*Fukushima workers pictured above*).

Environmental groups in Japan have launched a petition directed to Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry and Shunichi Tanaka, Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NRA) demanding that they concentrate on the marine calamity and cease all activities related to restarting nuclear power plants in Japan or selling the technology abroad. Please sign this petition today!

In recognizing that the technical challenges at the Fukushima Daiichi site are immense, the environmental groups, supported by many colleagues and activist groups around the world, are asking the Japanese government to "bring together the combined wisdom of independent experts with no vested interests from within Japan and internationally (i.e. domestic and international independent expertise)."

Meanwhile, while 95% of the Japanese public believe that the situation at Fukushima Daiichi is out of control, Prime Minister Abe focused his recent energies on a final, and successful, push to secure the 2020 Olympic Games for Tokyo. He used the selection of Tokyo as host city for the Games to state that "that there has not been, is not now and will not be any health problems whatsoever," from the disaster, a position that is unsupportable in medical science.

Buried in the same news cycle was the decision by the Japanese courts not to prosecute TEPCO executives for their handling of the Fukushima disaster. Residents of Fukushima had filed a criminal complaint, and are insensed at this decision.

In the US, 31 Fukushima-style reactors remain running — the antiquated and dangerous General Electric Mark I and Mark II boiling water reactors (BWRs). This notorious design was flagged in 1972 as too flawed to build, but the warnings were ignored. During Congressional testimony in 1976, three senior GE engineers who had publicly resigned, testified the design was "so dangerous that it now threatens the very existence of life on this planet."

Shortly after the Fukushima Daiichi disaster began, Beyond Nuclear initiated its Freeze our Fukushimas campaign to call for the shutdown of all this country's GE Mark I and II BWRs. While Japan now contemplates how it will permanently freeze a wall 90 feet (30 meters) deep into the earth around the Fukushima wreckage to contain radioactivity migrating into water and the ocean, the focus must also be on permanently freezing the operation of all GE Mark I and Mark II reactors.

Beyond Nuclear continues its work in support of communities threatened by the GE reactors. Join the actions for closure of dangerous GE reactors with the next live webcast on September 30, 2013 where the public meets the NRC. Contact Paul Gunter at paul@beyondnuclear.org to learn more and visit the Freeze our Fukushimas page on our website. You can also download our Freeze our Fukushimas campaign pamphlet that also lists all the Mark I and II reactor sites in the U.S.

Protests against Kashiwazaki-Kariwa restart

September 28, 2013

Tokyo rally protests moves to restart Kashiwazaki-Kariwa reactors

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201309280042>

By HIROSHI NAKANO/ Staff Writer

Anti-nuclear demonstrators rallied in central Tokyo on Sept. 27 to oppose Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s moves to restart two reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant in Niigata Prefecture.

TEPCO applied to the Nuclear Regulation Authority earlier in the day for safety screenings of the No. 6 and No. 7 reactors of the plant, a step that could lead to their restart.

Protest rallies have been held almost every Friday evening since March 2012 outside the prime minister's office in Tokyo's Nagatacho district.

Some participants of the Sept. 27 rally were seen holding placards calling for all-out efforts to resolve the radioactive water crisis that has continued for several months at TEPCO's crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Their chants against nuclear power and the restart preparations at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant echoed into the prime minister's office and the National Diet Building.

"I cannot accept that the economy is put ahead of the lives and safety of the general public," said Yukio Kurosu, a 66-year-old man from Ushiku, Ibaraki Prefecture.

Get the anti-nuke message to young people

September 30, 2013

Chants of 'no nukes' echo in streets of Shibuya, Harajuku districts

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201309300047>

video URL: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=FNpxgzYcw0k

By SATORU OGAWA/ Staff Writer

With an eye to getting their message out to young people, demonstrators calling for a departure from nuclear power on Sept. 29 changed course from their usual venue and took to the streets in Tokyo's trendy Shibuya and Harajuku districts.

Protesters shouted slogans such as "We've got enough electric power" and "No nuke reactors on earthquake-prone islands" as they marched past Marui City Shibuya and other fashionable commercial establishments packed with trend-conscious youths.

The "No Nukes Demo" was the brainchild of the Metropolitan Coalition against Nukes, a civil advocacy group that organizes weekly anti-nuclear protest rallies outside the prime minister's office on Friday evenings in Tokyo's Nagatacho district. Organizers said they thought that the nation's youths are not even aware that all 50 existing nuclear power reactors in Japan are currently offline, for maintenance and safety checks.

The march followed a rally in Nagatacho on Sept. 27 opposing Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s application to the Nuclear Regulation Authority for safety screening of two reactors at its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant in Niigata Prefecture, as a prelude to their possible restart.

LDP far from unanimous on nukes

October 7, 2013

Even in Abe's LDP, anti-nuclear sentiment hard to quell

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201310050040

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe doesn't have unanimous support from within his party for his policy of resuming operations at nuclear plants once safety standards are met.

A small group of ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers is battling him on the issue.

Those who question the wisdom of continuing to rely on nuclear energy have taken heart from recent comments by Junichiro Koizumi, the still highly popular former prime minister, who has been calling for a shift from nuclear energy as soon as possible.

One lawmaker who appealed directly to Abe to reconsider his position on the nuclear issue was Seiichiro Murakami, a veteran Lower House member who is now serving his ninth term.

The two men talked for about 20 minutes at the prime minister's office on Oct. 4.

"The most urgent issues are finding the cause of the Fukushima nuclear accident and bringing closure to that accident," Murakami told Abe.

The lawmaker then handed Abe a proposal based on his position as chair of a party subcommittee looking into the causes behind the Fukushima nuclear accident. He urged Abe to be more cautious about resuming operations at nuclear plants and also criticized as too expensive a plan to create an underground wall of frozen soil at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant to prevent radiation-contaminated water from reaching the ocean.

None of Japan's 50 nuclear reactors are currently operating although applications have been submitted for safety checks that would be required before operations can be resumed at some of them.

Murakami has generated quite a backlash with his virulent anti-nuclear comments. A high-ranking member of the subcommittee resigned in August because Murakami refused to compromise.

Moreover, lawmakers who favor a continuation of nuclear energy also interfered with the wording of the proposal presented to Abe and deleted a passage that stated, "Construction of new nuclear plants should be postponed unless methods for processing nuclear fuel have been established."

After his meeting with Abe, Murakami told reporters the issue was made more difficult by the plethora of lawmakers with vested interests.

At the same time, the younger generation of LDP lawmakers are also raising doubts about aggressively promoting nuclear energy.

Masatoshi Akimoto, 38, was elected for the first time from the Chiba No. 9 district in December's Lower House election. In March, he set up a study group on energy policy and a key issue is reviewing the central government's program for recycling nuclear fuel.

He formed the study group out of concerns voiced after the Fukushima nuclear disaster that radioactive waste would only stop being a health hazard 100,000 years from now.

Akimoto has called on other first-term LDP lawmakers, and 10 or so meet on an almost monthly basis to discuss the issue after hearing the opinions of experts. Most of the members are still raising children and they are acutely sensitive to public sentiment calling for alternative sources of energy.

On Oct. 2, six members of the study group visited Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, where Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd. is constructing a nuclear fuel reprocessing facility.

Takaaki Katsumata, 37, a Lower House member elected from the Tokai bloc of the proportional representation constituency, said: "I found myself unable to support the decision to promote nuclear energy as national policy. It is our responsibility to future generations. I believe I am supported by the voters."

Still, the vast majority of LDP members are strongly in favor of promoting nuclear energy and the small number of rebels are looked upon with mild amusement.

When Akimoto tried to ask a question in the Diet raising doubts about the nuclear fuel recycling program, an older LDP member advised him, "You should think about your own future."

However, Akimoto is not totally discouraged, especially because attention continues to be focused on the failure to deal with the radiation-contaminated water at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. Koizumi's anti-nuclear statements also provide strong encouragement.

"This is an excellent opportunity to review nuclear policy," Akimoto said.

(This article was written by Sachiko Miwa and Sawaaki Hikita.)

Naoto Kan in New York

October 9, 2013

Ex-PM Kan brings anti-nuclear message to New York

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131009p2g00m0dm032000c.html>

NEW YORK (Kyodo) -- Former Prime Minister Naoto Kan spoke about his experience with the Fukushima nuclear disaster in New York City on Tuesday, warning that a major accident at the nearest nuclear plant would force an evacuation of Manhattan.

The two-reactor Indian Point Energy Center has faced criticism from the public and from New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who says the plant should be shut down because of the complications involved in evacuation.

Kan spoke at a panel along with former Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Gregory Jaczko, former NRC Commissioner Peter Bradford, and retired nuclear engineer Arnie Gunderson.

Jaczko said that the plant's operator Entergy should consider phasing it out of service. The plant is located less than 70 kilometers from New York City.

Former PM Kan has become active both domestically and overseas on energy policy. He spoke on the Fukushima disaster and the importance of developing sustainable energy in Taiwan in September and California in June.

Kan and the other panelists were scheduled to speak in Boston on Wednesday. Boston is located around 70 kilometers from the 40-year old Pilgrim Nuclear Generating Station.

Tens of thousands of anti-nuke protesters in Tokyo

October 13, 2013

Thousands mass for antinuclear rally in Tokyo

JJI

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/13/national/thousands-mass-for-antinuclear-rally-in-tokyo/#.UlrH3lM0_9k

Tens of thousands of people rallied against nuclear power Sunday in what appeared to be the largest demonstration since Japan's last active reactor went offline for maintenance on Sept. 15.

Demonstrators marched in front of government agencies in Tokyo chanting such slogans as "We oppose nuclear power" and "We oppose restarting nuclear reactors."

A total of 40,000 people took part in the rally, organizers said.

"I am really angry to see (Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's) lie go unchallenged," Misao Redwolf said at an event organized by her Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, referring to Abe's speech to the International Olympic Committee last month in Buenos Aires.

In his presentation for Tokyo's bid to host the 2020 Olympics, Abe said the situation regarding the radioactive water leaks at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant is under control. The IOC subsequently voted to bring the Games to Tokyo.

Speaking at Sunday's meeting, Nobel literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe sought to make Japan nuclear-free at an early date.

"We need to win back a world where our future children can live," the author said.

Freelance journalist Satoshi Kamata called the nuclear industry corrupt and incorrigible.

"Nuclear plants have been built with lies, money and intimidation, and this has not changed at all, even after the (2011 Fukushima) accident," Kamata said.

"Something that could leave future generations with irreparable damage must not be done," said 31-year-old Tokyo employee Takanori Teraoka, father of a 1-year-old girl.

"I can't condone the lie Abe told to bring the Olympics to Tokyo," said Noriko Iwata, 63, from the city of Saitama.

On Sept. 15, the No. 4 reactor at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, was suspended for routine maintenance, leaving all of the nation's 50 viable commercial reactors offline for the first time in more than a year.

"One for No Nukes": 40,000 in Tokyo

October 14, 2013

Tens of thousands of protesters attend anti-nuclear events in Tokyo

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201310140073>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

With all the nation's 50 nuclear reactors offline, an estimated 40,000 people attended a series of demonstrations in central Tokyo on Oct. 13 organized by three anti-nuclear civic groups to express their opposition to the government's push for restarts.

In the events called "One for No Nukes," participants raised their voices in protest, saying, "No to restarts."

The Metropolitan Coalition against Nukes organized the protests along with two civic groups "Sayonara Genpatsu 1,000 mannin Action" (Good-bye to nuclear power through action by 10 million people) and "Genpatsu wo Nakusu Zenkoku Renrakukai" (National conference on abolishing nuclear power plants).

At a rally held in the early afternoon at Tokyo Metropolitan Hibiya Public Hall in Chiyoda Ward, Nobel Prize-winning writer Kenzaburo Oe, a member of Sayonara Genpatsu 1,000 mannin Action, appealed for more efforts to stop the first restart of any of the reactors.

"If an opportunity to restart the nuclear reactors is given at some point in six months or a year, it will be impossible to push back the momentum to the restarting of the nuclear plants," he said.

After the rally, protesters marched nearby to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry office as well as the head office of Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the devastated Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Mayuko Mizuno, an office worker, brought her 3-year-old daughter to the demonstrations.

"I am concerned about my daughter's future as I am afraid that the operation of the nuclear reactors will restart little by little," said Mizuno, 39.

She added, "I'd like to keep raising my voice (against the restart of the reactors)."

No nuclear reactors have been operating since the only reactor running at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture was taken offline Sept. 15 for routine inspections.

However, five electric power companies, including TEPCO, have applied to the Nuclear Regulation Authority for safety examinations required for restarting 14 of the 50 nuclear reactors. The administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe says it will approve restarts of the reactors that are deemed safe by the NRA.

(This article was written by Katsuhei Kawamura and Daisuke Shimizu.)

Koizumi's troubling remarks

October 17, 2013

Mixed reactions to Koizumi's view on nuclear power

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20131017_13.html

Former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi's call for Japan to end its reliance on nuclear power is causing a stir as the country discusses future energy policies.

Koizumi, who is retired from politics, has recently been voicing his views against nuclear power in public.

In a speech on Wednesday, he reiterated his position.

Koizumi said if the government and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party decide that Japan should end nuclear power generation and use renewable energy instead, most of the Japanese people would endorse the policy.

LDP members are troubled by their former leader's remarks.

Some say Koizumi's position is incompatible with the party policy to promote the resumption of the country's idled nuclear plants while respecting the nuclear regulation body's safety assessments. Others worry that Koizumi's remarks could give the impression to the public that the party is divided on the issue.

LDP leaders say it is not wise for them to be seen in conflict with Koizumi, who still draws wide attention when he speaks.

They say they will try to explain that the party's and Koizumi's position do not differ in seeking to reduce Japan's dependency on nuclear power.

The opposition generally welcomes Koizumi's calls, although some doubt his sincerity because he promoted nuclear power generation as prime minister. Some are hoping to work with Koizumi on the matter.

Renewed interest for Tonchinkan ningyo

October 21, 2013

New appreciation for dolls created decades ago to protest nuclear weapons

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201310210005

By KYOSUKE YAMAMOTO/ Staff Writer

NAGASAKI--Comical, but darkly nuanced clay dolls that were once popular with tourists here are finding renewed appreciation as a symbol of the city's anti-nuclear efforts.

Called "Tonchinkan ningyo" (irrelevant dolls), they were created by folk art sculptor Kaoru Kubota (1928-1970) as a response to the nuclear arms race, which he considered the folly of humanity. The handcrafted dolls stand less than 10 centimeters tall each and have a colorful unglazed coating. At first glance, they appear humorous, but also convey a sense of sorrow.

Souvenir shops in the city, site of the world's second atomic bombing on Aug. 9, 1945, sold the dolls at around 30 yen (30 cents) each throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

The dolls returned to the public consciousness recently after Brazilian poet Luiz Carlos Lessa Vinholes visited Nagasaki last month to donate 57 dolls from his personal collection to the city government. The dolls will be on display through Oct. 31 at a confectionery shop in the city.

Vinholes, 80, who once served as a diplomat at the Brazilian Embassy in Tokyo, is well-versed in art as a collector of ukiyo-e and chinaware. He began collecting the dolls after he was mesmerized by them during a business trip to Nagasaki in 1961.

"They are the creation of a genius," he said of the dolls. "They are so original, unparalleled in the world."

Born in Aichi Prefecture, Kubota moved to Nagasaki when he was 24 and learned how to create pottery works. Back then, it was the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Kubota reportedly churned out 300,000 dolls until he died in 1970 at the age of 42.

"I will give the dolls twisted-clown faces out of my hatred for war," Kubota scribbled in his notebook. "I am determined to make the dolls as long as nuclear and hydrogen bombs are being built."

In 1962 Vinholes asked his acquaintances to feature Kubota's dolls in a Japanese art magazine. In the article, he described Kubota's ability of artistic presentation as being similar to that of Picasso. His passion for the dolls helped them gain wide exposure, both in and out of Japan.

Vinholes brought his collection with him when he left Japan in 1977.

Last month, for the first time in 52 years, he returned to Nagasaki to donate his collection to the city. He said he wanted to renew awareness about the dolls and the artist.

In addition to Vinholes' efforts, a drive has been under way by citizens to give the dolls the attention they deserve.

In 1995, a group of people formed a committee to establish a museum dedicated to Tonchinkan dolls.

Thanks to the group's endeavors, about 600 pieces in the possession of the city government will go on display at the city museum of history and folklore late this month.

Hirou Ichinose, the 80-year-old leader of the group who was associated with Kubota, said they are determined to pass down what Kubota wanted to express through his works.

"The dolls are another peace memorial that drives home the absurdity of building nuclear weapons," he said. "We want to carry on sharing his message."

Vinholes' collection will be moved to the museum in November where it will be put on display indefinitely.

Get Koizumi

October 26, 2013

Get Koizumi: Nuclear village goes on offensive

by Philip Brator

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/26/national/get-koizumi-nuclear-village-goes-on-offensive/#.UmzYVlOwT9k>

Since spring, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has become increasingly vocal in his opposition to nuclear power. Though he decided Japan should abandon atomic reactors after the Great East Japan Earthquake set in motion the Fukushima crisis, he was already retired from politics. The mass media paid no attention.

Then he sat for an interview with the Mainichi Shimbun in summer and described a trip he took to Europe, at his own initiative and in the company of several nuclear industry executives, to inspect the

Onkalo nuclear-waste repository in Finland and the situation in Germany, which has moved away from atomic energy. Despite the presence of men whose job it was to convince him otherwise, he returned even more resolute in his belief that Japan must reject nuclear.

The response has been divided along predictably ideological lines. Politicians who are against the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's plan to reopen as many plants as possible are delighted to have the former president of the LDP on their side. Since Koizumi is one of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's mentors it might be bad form to criticize him, but last week he called Koizumi's idea "irresponsible" on TV Asahi.

The official party position seems to be to ignore him. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga remarked that like any citizen, Koizumi "can say anything he wants," though Economic Revitalization Minister Akira Amari told reporters that Koizumi's stance demonstrates that he's not thinking about what he's saying.

All this beating around the bush hardly mattered to the average person, but on Oct. 20 Koizumi gave a lecture in Kisarazu, Chiba Prefecture, and invited TV cameras to record it. That night, every station showed clips of the speech and suddenly the ex-premier couldn't be ignored, since the general public could see for itself that he is adamant in his opposition to nuclear energy, which he supported when he was a lawmaker. The speech itself was nothing special, but the fact that he was making it — and making a big deal of it — was.

Still, it wasn't as notable as the letter Koizumi wrote earlier in response to a Yomiuri Shimbun editorial that slammed his position. Koizumi's angry missive picked apart each complaint made by the paper, which backs the LDP's plan to restart reactors. The Yomiuri called Koizumi's belief in Japan's ability to develop renewable energy "optimistic and irresponsible," and reiterated all the arguments of the pro-nuclear camp — that nuclear is cleaner and cheaper; that thermal is bad for consumers and the environment.

Koizumi's rebuttals were flimsy, but his main assertion — that Japan cannot maintain a nuclear-power industry if it has no place to put its waste — was attacked by the paper with sloppy logic. The Yomiuri dismissed Koizumi's concern because the short-sightedness of not providing a nuclear waste repository "is the fault of politics," of which he was at the center for many years. Koizumi has no right to complain about a situation he had a hand in creating.

In his famously casual way, Koizumi waved off the criticism by admitting he didn't develop a plan for storing nuclear waste when he was prime minister, but that doesn't mean "a person can't correct himself." In any event, the Yomiuri professes the same unfounded optimism it accuses Koizumi of advancing. The paper says the problem of finding a place to put nuclear waste will eventually be solved "by political means," but there is no indication that anyone in Japan will ever allow the government to bury it in their backyard.

Political pundit Yoshiya Kobayashi, quoted by online news magazine Zakzak, was flabbergasted by the letter, saying that while Koizumi has firmly stated he has no intention of running for office again, he appears to be even more of a *henjin* (eccentric) than he was when he was a legislator. Koizumi is “pushing his opinion” even though he gains nothing personally from it. This is a first for Japan: a political figure who not only undergoes a change of mind in public, but tries to make a difference after giving up the political power to do so.

Koizumi’s public challenging of a major daily’s editorial position is something else no Japanese politician of his stature, retired or active, has done before, and the backlash was immediate. Isao Iijima, Koizumi’s closest aide for 35 years, wrote an article for the weekly Shukan Bunshun in which he implies his former boss never had an original idea in his life. Most politicians are facilitators, not idea men, and whatever you think of his pet privatization project, Koizumi was good at selling it, what with his knack for communicating policy in simple, down-to-earth language. Iijima’s article is transparently self-serving, since he now works for the LDP as a cabinet adviser. Like the Yomiuri, he believes that all the problems with nuclear power will be solved over time through “political efforts.”

What might be making the LDP nervous is not so much Koizumi’s activism but rather the effect it could have on his son, Shinjiro, the party’s rock star. Shinjiro is genuinely liked by the public, which is why he volunteered for the position of reconstruction minister, a job nobody else in the LDP would touch. Abe is in his debt, because people in the disaster-affected areas think that if the LDP is sending its most popular politician to Tohoku, it means the government is serious about rebuilding.

That places him in an awkward position, since the media wants to know his thoughts on his father’s *genpatsu zero* (no nukes) advocacy. An article in Yukan Fuji quoted him as saying that while he must follow the party line, he wants to hear what his father has to say.

Earlier, Mainichi reported that he had answered some journalists’ query about Koizumi Sr. with the observation that politics is a struggle between “the ideal and reality,” and no one wants a politician who “ignores people’s hopes and dreams.” Of course, many of his supporters hope that the nuclear reactors don’t reopen — but maybe it’s just a dream.

Koizumi and Yoshida: Nuclear-free society a common goal

October 29, 2013

Koizumi, Yoshida agree on nuclear-free society

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20131029_44.html

Former prime minister of Japan Junichiro Koizumi and the leader of the opposition Social Democratic Party have agreed that the country should stop generating nuclear power.

SDP leader Tadatomo Yoshida, who assumed his post this month, met Koizumi in Tokyo on Tuesday.

Koizumi said continuing nuclear power generation would be irresponsible and impossible. He said the public cannot understand the policy of building nuclear waste disposal sites in the earthquake-prone country.

Yoshida asked Koizumi to work with him toward achieving a nuclear-free society.

Koizumi said each party must work to achieve the goal.

He added that he will continue his own efforts, and that appealing to public opinion is the only way to get the government to end nuclear power generation.

Yoshida later told reporters that he hopes to create a larger movement toward a nuclear-free society, now that he's confirmed that he and Koizumi share ideas.

Oct. 29, 2013 - Updated 10:56 UTC

What is Koizumi after?

October 29, 2013

SDP woos Koizumi to lend clout to anti-nuclear drive

by Reiji Yoshida

Staff Writer

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/29/national/sdp-woos-koizumi-to-lend-clout-to-anti-nuclear-drive/#.Um_00FOwT9k

If only briefly, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi raised hopes he will stage a comeback as an anti-nuclear crusader when he met Tuesday with the head of a minor but like-minded opposition party.

But, during their 45-minute meeting, Koizumi declined Social Democratic Party chief Tadatomo Yoshida's request to cooperate with his five-Diet-member party's push to abolish nuclear plants. According to Yoshida, Koizumi argued that it was the duty of each party and politician to appeal separately and directly to the public.

"I asked him to cooperate, but he said that each party, which has its own arguments, should try to realize the abolition of nuclear power plants," Yoshida, who took charge of the SDP earlier this month, told reporters after the meeting.

Koizumi also insisted he is not planning to form a new party or a political force centered on anti-nuclear policy, Yoshida, said, noting Koizumi told him he will continue to seek to change public opinion, which will eventually influence the government.

Once the most powerful opposition party and a longtime foe of Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party, the SDP has advocated a nonnuclear energy policy for years. It is now a minor party, with five Diet members.

Koizumi met Yoshida at the Center for International Public Policy Studies in Tokyo, where Koizumi serves as an adviser.

After stepping down as prime minister in 2006, Koizumi, 74, largely withdrew from the public eye, rarely remarking on politics.

That changed earlier this year when he began calling for the abolition of nuclear plants after visiting a final disposal site in Finland that is supposed to store spent fuel up to 100,000 years.

The SDP is attempting to expand its political clout by calling on antinuclear political forces, such as Koizumi.

Officials at the prime minister's office appear worried about Koizumi's anti-nuclear call. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has pledged to restart any of the now-shut 50 nuclear plants that pass Nuclear Regulation Authority safety tests.

Koizumi back on political stage

October 30, 2013



Koizumi back to center of political stage with call for zero nuke plants

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201310300055

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

While nuclear power advocates within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party are none too happy about their former leader Junichiro Koizumi repeatedly calling for abolishing all nuclear plants, opposition politicians are wooing his cooperation.

They are hoping to enlist the support of the popular former prime minister in hopes of gathering anti-nuclear forces to counterattack the pro-nuclear Abe administration.

On Oct. 29, Koizumi met with Social Democratic Party leader Tadatomo Yoshida and Seiji Mataichi, the opposition party's secretary-general, at his office in Tokyo.

"I was initially on the side of advancing nuclear power generation," Yoshida quoted Koizumi as saying during the 45-minute meeting. "But after the nuclear accident (in Fukushima Prefecture in 2011), I had second thoughts. I have realized that it is irresponsible to continue using nuclear reactors.

"Japanese citizens hope that money being wasted for nuclear power projects, such as the disposal of spent nuclear fuel, will be spent on developing new energy sources."

The 71-year-old retired politician, who served as prime minister between 2001 and 2006, also called on the government to make a bold shift in energy policy.

"The government should make a political decision to reduce the number of nuclear plants to zero," Koizumi was quoted as saying.

Yoshida was elected in October as chief of the SDP, known as a staunch opponent to nuclear power. During the meeting, he asked for Koizumi's cooperation with his party, with the hope of countering the Abe administration, which has been enjoying high public approval ratings since the LDP returned to power in December.

But Koizumi only said: "Each party should make its own efforts for abolishing nuclear plants. I am convinced that by changing public opinion, we will surely be able to lead the government to make a political decision to move away from nuclear power."

He dismissed talk that he will form a new party on a nuclear-free platform, saying, "I'm unhappy about such speculation," according to Yoshida.

Koizumi has called for no nuclear plants in speeches and closed sessions. He is scheduled to hold a news conference at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo on Nov. 12 under the title, "The path Japan should take."

For opposition parties, Koizumi's break from the LDP's official line appears to offer an opportunity for a counterattack by assembling anti-nuclear forces.

Your Party head Yoshimi Watanabe, who talked with Koizumi for four hours about nuclear energy policy in late September, expects to follow up on the issue.

"I was treated (by Koizumi) to a meal the previous time, so I hope to treat him the next time," Watanabe said Oct. 28.

Other opposition politicians are also trying to cash in on Koizumi's popularity.

"There is a stance we share with him," Japanese Communist Party chairman Kazuo Shii said Oct. 17.

Ichiro Ozawa, leader of the People's Life Party, said Oct. 28, "If (Koizumi) plans to start a full-fledged political movement (on a nuclear-free policy), I may talk with him someday."

Meanwhile, LDP executives have taken a critical stance toward Koizumi's remarks.

"Koizumi is probably playing a hunch, but I think it is irresponsible to promise zero nuclear power plants at this stage," Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on a TV program broadcast Oct. 24.

LDP Secretary-General Shigeru Ishiba declared, "Our party's policy will not change."

Lower House member Shinjiro Koizumi, Koizumi's second son, has shown a relatively negative stance toward nuclear energy.

Still, Shinjiro, who serves as parliamentary secretary in charge of reconstruction from the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, remained noncommittal about his father's no-nuclear campaign when he talked with reporters on Oct. 29.

"Japan is a country where you can express your opinions freely," he said. "In modern-day Japan, even elderly people are full of energy."

October 29, 2013

SDP woos Koizumi to lend clout to anti-nuclear drive

by Reiji Yoshida

Staff Writer

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/29/national/sdp-woos-koizumi-to-lend-clout-to-anti-nuclear-drive/#.Um_00FOwT9k

If only briefly, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi raised hopes he will stage a comeback as an anti-nuclear crusader when he met Tuesday with the head of a minor but like-minded opposition party.

But, during their 45-minute meeting, Koizumi declined Social Democratic Party chief Tadatomo Yoshida's request to cooperate with his five-Diet-member party's push to abolish nuclear plants. According to Yoshida, Koizumi argued that it was the duty of each party and politician to appeal separately and directly to the public.

"I asked him to cooperate, but he said that each party, which has its own arguments, should try to realize the abolition of nuclear power plants," Yoshida, who took charge of the SDP earlier this month, told reporters after the meeting.

Koizumi also insisted he is not planning to form a new party or a political force centered on anti-nuclear policy, Yoshida, said, noting Koizumi told him he will continue to seek to change public opinion, which will eventually influence the government.

Once the most powerful opposition party and a longtime foe of Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party, the SDP has advocated a nonnuclear energy policy for years. It is now a minor party, with five Diet members.

Koizumi met Yoshida at the Center for International Public Policy Studies in Tokyo, where Koizumi serves as an adviser.

After stepping down as prime minister in 2006, Koizumi, 74, largely withdrew from the public eye, rarely remarking on politics.

That changed earlier this year when he began calling for the abolition of nuclear plants after visiting a final disposal site in Finland that is supposed to store spent fuel up to 100,000 years.

The SDP is attempting to expand its political clout by calling on antinuclear political forces, such as Koizumi.

Officials at the prime minister's office appear worried about Koizumi's anti-nuclear call. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has pledged to restart any of the now-shut 50 nuclear plants that pass Nuclear Regulation Authority safety tests.

Antinukes marching in suits

October 31, 2013

Office workers march in anti-nuclear demonstration in Tokyo

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201310310072>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear protesters, many wearing business suits, marched through Tokyo's Shinbashi district in the evening of Oct. 30.

Most of the attendees came straight from their offices to take part in the 40-minute demo.

The group started at a park near Shinbashi Station at 7 p.m and marched nearly 2 kilometers in the business district, shouting slogans such as "No to restarts," "Stop contaminated water" and "Stop export."

They also passed by the head office of Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, to raise their voices against nuclear energy.

The event organizer's aim was to increase the involvement of office workers, who generally hesitate to join demonstrations. Ordinary people are generally not taking any action, the organizer said.

Satoko Namikawa, a corporate employee who lives in Tokorozawa, Saitama Prefecture, attended the march in her black suit after finishing work.

The 31-year-old Namikawa said, "Having seen the devastation in Fukushima Prefecture a year ago, I no longer feel that nuclear power is necessary."

She added, "I hope more people feel inclined to join demonstrations after seeing that many company employees attended this one."

About 600 people attended the march, the organizer said.

600 march in business suits in central Tokyo to protest against nuke plants



Workers from different companies march against nuclear power plants in central Tokyo, on Oct. 30. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131031p2a00m0na003000c.html>

An estimated 600 workers from different companies wearing business suits and ties took to the streets in central Tokyo on Oct. 30 to protest against nuclear power plants.

"No nuclear plants! Protect our children!" shouted participants including Michihiko Senda, 47, and his wife Rie, 45, during a 1.7-kilometer march in Tokyo's Shimbashi district. The couple and two other people who met at anti-nuclear demonstrations and meetings organized the event. They called for participants on their website and Twitter account.

The group required participants to wear business suits to raise awareness of the nuclear energy policy among company employees who have important roles in the business world and to appeal to society.

Yamamoto wants the Emperor to know

October 31, 2013

Anti-nuclear lawmaker tries to get Emperor's attention

by Reiji Yoshida

Staff Writer

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/31/national/anti-nuclear-lawmaker-tries-to-get-emperors-attention/#.UnKHAFOwT9k>

Upper House lawmaker Taro Yamamoto, an anti-nuclear activist who was formerly an actor, created a public stir Thursday when he apparently approached Emperor Akihito for political purposes at a garden party hosted by the Imperial Couple in Tokyo.

During the biannual event, where 2,140 celebrities from various fields and policymakers were invited to the Akasaka Imperial Garden, Yamamoto handed a letter to the Emperor, an act that immediately prompted criticism that he might be trying to use the monarch for political purposes, which the Constitution strictly forbids.

Later in the day, Yamamoto reportedly said that he wrote and handed the letter to the Emperor because **he wanted him to learn about children exposed to radioactive fallout from the wrecked Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant and the horrendous working conditions of those working on the ground.**

"I had no intention" to use the Emperor for political purposes, Yamamoto said.

But other lawmakers immediately started questioning Yamamoto's behavior, prompting the Upper House Steering Committee to convene an urgent meeting to discuss the issue Friday morning.

Since the end of the war, it has been taboo for anyone to include the Emperor in a political agenda, and the monarch himself is not allowed to express any view that could be considered political.

Article 4 of the Constitution is interpreted as allowing the Emperor to only engage in politically neutral state ceremonies.

Yamamoto, who was elected to the Upper House in July, is known for his radical, if not extreme, anti-nuclear arguments, emphasizing the radioactive threat from the Fukushima plant.

According Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, the Emperor immediately gave the letter to the grand chamberlain, who was accompanying him. It was not immediately known if the Emperor read the letter.

"By using common sense, people should consider if it's appropriate to give a letter to the Emperor in such an occasion as a garden party," Suga told a daily press briefing.

The postwar Constitution was enacted to ban the Shinto-influenced militarism of the 1930s and 1940s, in which the Emperor was used by the military as a untouchable living god to keep the people united during the war.

Article 4 states that "the Emperor shall perform only such acts in matters of state as are provided for in the Constitution, and he shall not have powers related to government."

Yamamoto in trouble (for breaking protocol?)

November 1, 2013

Upper house committee hears lawmaker who handed letter to emperor

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131101p2g00m0dm075000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Members of the House of Councillors steering committee on Friday listened to independent lawmaker Taro Yamamoto who, in a rare breach of protocol, handed a letter directly to Emperor Akihito the previous day at an autumn garden party hosted by the emperor and Empress Michiko.

"I was not aware that (such an action) was violating the rules. I will accept any decision and opinion of the parliament," Yamamoto said after the meeting with committee members including Mitsuhide Iwaki, chairman of the upper house's Standing Committee on Rules and Administration and a veteran upper house lawmaker from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Yamamoto also insisted that his action did not constitute political exploitation of the emperor, but did not give a clear answer when asked by a reporter if he had any plans to resign.

The nation's Constitution defines the Japanese emperor as a "symbol" of Japan and allows him to perform only such acts in matters of state as are provided in the Constitution. The Constitution also says the emperor shall not have powers related to government.

On Thursday, Yamamoto handed the emperor a letter detailing the current working environment at the disaster-hit Fukushima Daiichi power plant. He told reporters afterward he simply wanted the emperor to know about the health effects of the nuclear crisis.

Yamamoto, 38, an actor-turned-politician, won an upper house seat for the first time in last year's upper house election from the five-seat Tokyo constituency. He is known for his antinuclear power activities.

Iwaki quoted Yamamoto as saying during the hearing, "I didn't think that (my action) would cause such trouble. I feel sorry about that."

The committee decided to hear from Yamamoto earlier in the day, where they agreed that his action "defied common sense," but they were split on whether it was subject to punishment. The committee will decide on Tuesday whether to discipline him, taking into account the outcome of the hearing.

Meanwhile, many Cabinet ministers criticized Yamamoto on Friday.

Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Minister Hakubun Shimomura told the day's news conference that Yamamoto appeared to have used the emperor for political purposes, urging him to resign as a lawmaker.

Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Akihiro Ota, who is the former head of the LDP's junior coalition partner New Komeito party, said Yamamoto acted inappropriately and lacked common sense as a legislator.

State minister Keiji Furuya, who supervises the country's police forces as chairman of the National Public Safety Commission, said Yamamoto's act was extremely unusual and that many Japanese people would regard it as unforgivable.

Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Yoshitaka Shindo told the day's news conference that he feels very uncomfortable about Yamamoto's act, which he viewed as a breach of manners toward the imperial family, and said Yamamoto should have acted in a way befitting a lawmaker.

Masashi Waki, secretary general of the LDP's delegation in the upper house, said parties should consider submitting a resolution urging Yamamoto to resign as a legislator if he does not step down voluntarily.

Jin Matsubara, chairman of the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan's Diet Affairs Committee, said Yamamoto's act was unforgivable.

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, co-head of the opposition Japan Restoration Party, said any Japanese could understand that Yamamoto's act was inexcusable, although there is no law against it.

Anti-nuclear politician under fire for handing letter to emperor

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201311010075

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A new Upper House member is in hot water for handing a letter to Emperor Akihito on Oct. 31 at a biannual imperial garden party expressing his anti-nuclear concerns, an action his colleagues say constitutes the political exploitation of the emperor.

The Upper House steering committee on Nov. 1 summoned Taro Yamamoto, an actor-turned-lawmaker who campaigned as an independent in the July election on abandoning nuclear power, for questioning about the incident. The committee is scheduled to hold an executive meeting on Nov. 5 to decide how to deal with the junior lawmaker.

"I think we have to impose some sort of punishment on him," said Toshiei Mizuochi, a committee head executive from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

After the hearing, Yamamoto told reporters that he will accept whatever punishment the committee imposes, because he, in fact, broke a tacit rule even though it was unintentional.

He also blamed the media for overblowing the incident.

"Because the media made too big a fuss over the issue, what I did has become political exploitation," Yamamoto said. "If I had intended to use (the emperor) for political purposes, I would have disclosed the contents of the letter, but I haven't.

"I, as an individual, only wanted to tell the emperor the truth about the health hazard posed to children and the workers who are exposed to radiation and being abandoned (at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant)."

At the garden party, Yamamoto handed the letter to the emperor, asking, "Could you read my letter?" Saying nothing, the emperor accepted the letter and handed it to the grand chamberlain, who was standing next to him, according to Yamamoto.

"I wanted to explain the plight of children exposed to radiation released after a nuclear accident (at the Fukushima plant) and people who are working at the facility in the worst conditions," Yamamoto told reporters later that day.

"From a common sense point of view, handing a letter to His Majesty may be rude. However, even though it is, I could not contain my desire to have him understand what is happening," the lawmaker said.

But the fresh-faced politician came under heavy fire immediately, because his action is seen as inappropriate to the formal occasion and may conflict with a stipulation of the Constitution that bans the political exploitation of the emperor.

Chapter 1 of the Constitution states that "the emperor shall be the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people, deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power," as well as that "he shall not have powers related to government."

"His behavior obviously constituted a breach of the Constitution," said Masashi Waki, the LDP's secretary-general in the Upper House, on Nov. 1. "He should take responsibility to prevent a recurrence."

Another LDP executive said Yamamoto should resign from the Diet.

"What he did merits his resignation as a lawmaker," said education minister Hakubun Shimomura.

"Allowing that action to go unpunished means allowing all people to hand letters directly to His Majesty at various events and ceremonies. That was nothing but political exploitation."

The emperor and empress invite about 2,000 guests twice a year in spring and fall to gatherings at Akasaka Imperial Gardens in Tokyo to be able to meet and talk with leading figures of the nation.

Such guests include the speakers of both parliament chambers, the prime minister, Cabinet members, other lawmakers, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, local government leaders, and prominent figures in various fields, such as culture, arts and social activities.

Junior Diet members are more likely to be invited than veteran lawmakers, according to sources.

Antinuclear Japanese lawmaker breaks protocol with letter to emperor

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131101p2g00m0dm031000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- In a rare gesture breaking protocol, a Japanese lawmaker known for his antinuclear activities handed a letter directly to Emperor Akihito on Thursday at an autumn garden party hosted by the emperor.

House of Councillors lawmaker Taro Yamamoto told reporters afterward he simply wanted the emperor to know about the current health effects of the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi power complex, but his action drew swift criticism from the government and other lawmakers on grounds it could be interpreted as an attempt to use the emperor for political purposes.

The nation's Constitution defines the Japanese emperor as a "symbol" of Japan and allows him to perform only acts in matters of state provided for in the supreme law. The Constitution also says the emperor shall not have powers related to government.

"I wrote the letter because I wanted the emperor to know the situation of children who have suffered from radiation exposure, the appalling labor conditions for workers at the nuclear plant, and the poor way radiation (exposure) is being managed," Yamamoto said.

He said he "absolutely" had no intention of using the emperor for political purposes.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga at a press conference indirectly expressed displeasure over the incident which took place while the emperor and Empress Michiko were hosting the party at the Akasaka Imperial Garden in Tokyo, saying, "Participants are to decide based on common sense whether it was appropriate or not (to take such action)."

Suga, the government's top spokesman, added he was not aware of the letter's contents.

Yamamoto was in the front row with other attendees lined up waiting for the emperor to pass by.

When the emperor came near him, Yamamoto expressed fear that the children are suffering from health problems, saying, "The future of the children is in danger" and gave the letter to the emperor, who soon handed it to the grand chamberlain nearby.

The upper house's Rules and Administration Committee decided Thursday to discuss Yamamoto's action on Friday.

Lawmakers from both the ruling and opposition parties voiced concern about Yamamoto's action. Keiichi Ishii, chief policymaker of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's junior coalition partner New Komeito party, said to a different group of reporters that such action "can exploit the imperial family for political purpose."

Akihiro Ohata, secretary general of the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan, said at a press conference, "Just because he is a Diet member does not give him the right to do everything."

Yamamoto, who became known for his antinuclear activities in the wake of the 2011 crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, won a seat as an independent in the upper house election last July. November 01, 2013(Mainichi Japan)

Koizumi defends his opinion on nuclear policy

November 3, 2013

Ex-PM Koizumi defends antinuclear drive, seeks policy change

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131103p2g00m0dm085000c.html>

YOKOHAMA (Kyodo) -- Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi defended his antinuclear stance on Sunday, urging the government to change its policy of restarting atomic power generation in the wake of the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

Koizumi brushed off criticism that he was "irresponsible" for calling on Japan to phase out nuclear power generation, saying in Yokohama that the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe "should discuss how to introduce renewable energy that would substitute for atomic power."

The former leader, who promoted nuclear power generation when he was in power, justified his change of attitude, saying, "People often change their minds." As an example, he referred to the fact that Japan became an ally of the United States after World War II, even though the two countries were enemies during the war.

He said it would be impossible to build a permanent disposal site for spent nuclear fuel and other radioactive waste in Japan due to opposition from local residents.

Koizumi pointed out that a disposal site was not built even before the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

"If a strong leader emerges, can he or she achieve the construction of a site that can be used for 100,000 years by ignoring opposition of local residents?" the former premier asked. "It would be optimistic and irresponsible to think that it is possible," he said.

Koizumi is scheduled to speak about Japan's energy policy at a press conference at the Japan National Press Club on Nov. 12.

Koizumi: "such a feckless project"

Koizumi hits back at criticism of sudden no-nuclear stance

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201311040051

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

YOKOHAMA--Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Nov. 3 railed against criticism that his call for no nuclear plants is "irresponsible," saying that maintaining the government's policy of promoting nuclear power generation is the more irresponsible course.

"It is overly optimistic and much more irresponsible to think nuclear power plants can be maintained just with the completion of disposal facilities (for spent nuclear fuel)," Koizumi, 71, said during a symposium at the Pacifico Yokohama convention center.

"Some news stories have criticized me, saying my call for abolishing all nuclear plants is optimistic and irresponsible," the retired politician said.

"(Such articles say) it is improper for a former prime minister to call for zero nuclear plants without offering any alternative plans," he continued. "However, there is one fact that we had failed to secure sites for final disposal (of the nuclear waste) even before an accident occurred at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant."

Koizumi concluded that the promotion of nuclear energy is only a waste of the country's resources.

"It's better to spend money on developing natural energy resources--citizens are more likely to agree with that idea--than using such large amounts of expenses and energy to advance such a feckless project (as nuclear power)," he said.

The former prime minister has been criticized for doing an about-face from when he was a supporter of nuclear power in his years in office from 2001 to 2006.

He apparently changed his stance after visiting an underground repository for spent nuclear fuel in Finland in August and hearing about how the radioactive materials would have to be sealed off for 100,000 years.

“It is natural that one changes one’s opinion,” Koizumi said. “Do not hesitate to mend your ways.”

Cyber-attack against anti-nuclear citizens

November 10, 2013

Anti-nuclear citizens groups targeted in massive cyber-attack

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201311100027

By TATSUYA SUDO/ Staff Writer

Anti-nuclear citizens groups around Japan were left reeling from a blizzard of e-mail traffic--more than 2.53 million messages--that had all the hallmarks of a coordinated cyber-attack.

At least 33 groups were targeted in the campaign carried out from mid-September to early November. Experts said there was little doubt that a computer program developed exclusively for the purpose was used in the attack. It ranks as **Japan’s first cyber-attack to target specific citizens groups.**

Lawyer Yuichi Kaido, who is acting on behalf of those groups, told The Asahi Shimbun he is considering filing a criminal complaint against the senders of the e-mails on grounds of forcible obstruction of business--that is, if the perpetrators can be found.

Kaido is also a co-representative of “Datsu-genpatsu Bengodan Zenkoku Renrakukai” (Nationwide liaison office for groups of lawyers working for the anti-nuclear lawsuits).

The groups targeted include the Women’s Active Museum on War and Peace and the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes.

The e-mail blitz started simultaneously on Sept. 18 or 19. In the 13 days up to Sept. 30, more than 2.1 million e-mails were sent to the groups.

One e-mail read, “Unless we kill all of the anti-nuclear believers, world peace will be never achieved.” During the period from Oct. 24 to Nov. 4, two groups were singled out for more than 430,000 e-mails.

Some of the groups provided the e-mails and other details to The Asahi Shimbun, which then asked several computer security companies to analyze them.

It emerged that the senders of the e-mails used a computer system that returns registration confirmation e-mails if people register their e-mail addresses to receive e-magazines or make inquiries.

The method of the attack is as follows:

Someone obtains an e-mail address of an anti-nuclear group from its website. Then, the person registers the e-mail address on the website of a different anti-nuclear group from twice to 300 times per minute using a special computer program by pretending that he or she wants to receive the e-magazine or make an inquiry.

Then, the website returns the same number of registration confirmation e-mails to the former anti-nuclear group.

The computer security firms tried to find the IP address of the person who registered the e-mail addresses. However, they were not able to do so as the person used the “Tor” anonymity system that makes it impossible to uncover IP addresses.

This type of cyber-attack is known as “Denial of service” because its aim is to obstruct the activities of the targeted organization.

The Tor system was also used in a 2010 incident in which information on international terrorism that had been gathered by Tokyo’s Metropolitan Police Department was leaked to the Internet.

In previous cyber-attacks, perpetrators tried to access individual Internet banking accounts, or attempted to get hold of confidential information of private companies and government organizations or obstruct their activities.

As of now, there are no obvious leads into who is responsible for the cyber-attack against the anti-nuclear groups.

“The sender may have tried to sow an internal feud among anti-nuclear groups,” said Shuichi Yanagimachi, a member of “Genpatsu-mondai Jumin-undo Zenkoku Renraku Center” (Nationwide liaison center on citizens movements on nuclear power generation issues).

Cyber-attack (2)

November 10, 2013

Anti-nuclear, civic groups targeted in large-scale cyber-attacks

KYODO

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/11/10/national/anti-nuclear-civic-groups-targeted-in-large-scale-cyber-attacks/#.Un_vzCewT9k

At least 33 civic groups nationwide — many of them anti-nuclear organizations — have been hit by a series of cyber-attacks bombarding them with a total of 2.53 million email messages since mid-September, group members and a lawyer representing them said Sunday.

The civic groups are considering filing a criminal complaint against the senders of the emails for obstruction of business, according to lawyer Yuichi Kaido, who represents the organizations, which includes Fukushima Genpatsu Kokusodan, a group formed by residents of the prefecture affected by the nuclear disaster at the No. 1 plant.

The first wave of emails arrived in September, flooding the 33 groups with over 2 million messages, the lawyer said. More messages were sent to two of the groups between late October and earlier this month.

While some of the emails contained hostile messages, the senders are believed to have used a software program designed to abuse computer systems that automatically send confirmation emails to people registering for online newsletters or making inquiries.

The perpetrators apparently obtained the email addresses of the civic groups and used them to register on websites that automatically return registration confirmations or reply messages.

The software, called Tor, was also used to block the tracing of Internet activities and conceal email senders' locations.

A member of the Fukushima residents group said around 140,000 emails were received thanking it for registering for online newsletters, wreaking havoc on the group's email activities.

Latest books on Fukushima

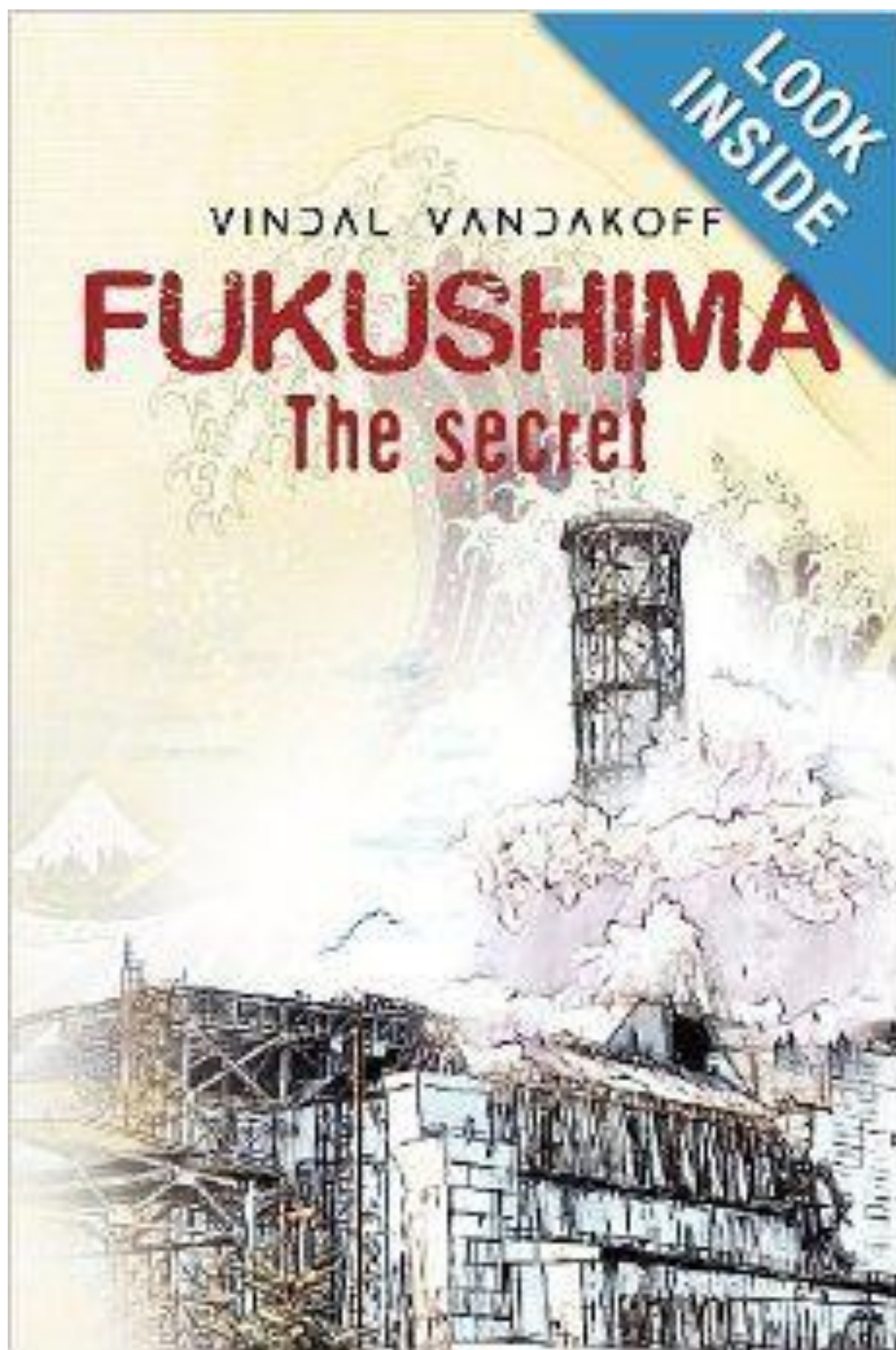
Books (in English) on Fukushima

UPDATE NOV. 2013

Books in French : see Pierre Fetet's blog de Fukushima

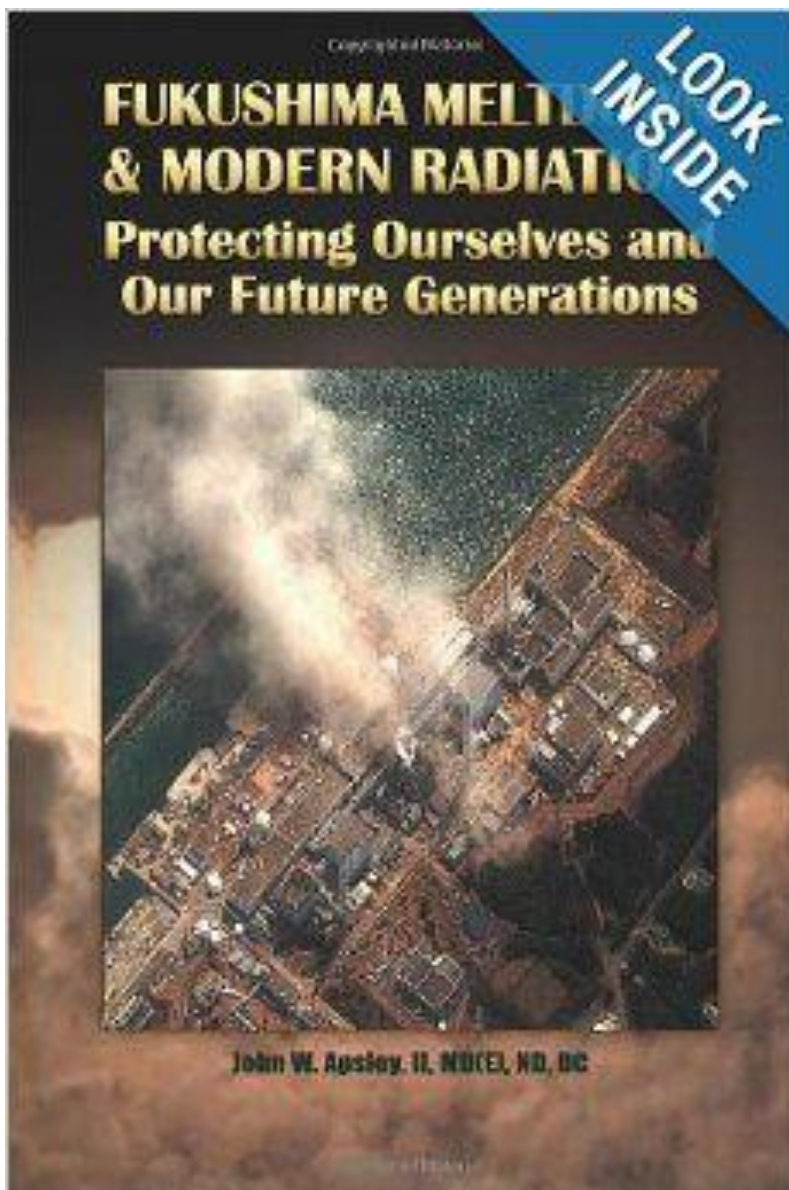
<http://www.fukushima-blog.com/article-des-livres-sur-fukushima-105303511.html>

December 2012



The only Science Fiction novel about the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster, written by someone who was there when it happened. Best selling author Vindal Vandakoff, who lives in Japan just one hundred kilometres from the Fukushima nuclear power station, writes a chilling account of what

happened on the day of the earthquake and tsunami. Caught in middle of the catastrophe he gives a firsthand description of the events that took place over the weeks after the tsunami struck the Daichi power plant. He follows the plight of several people who survive the tsunami, some of whom then must try and escape the massive amount of radiation that is spewed out by the destroyed nuclear power plant. He goes in detail about the cover-ups and lies the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Company propagated to Japanese public brainwashing them into thinking everything is okay and there is nothing to worry about. He exposes the perilous situation that still exists at the power plant, which is still releasing 10,000,000 bq of radiation per hour one and a half years after the accident. He brings to light a world catastrophe that is waiting to happen; the Number Four Reactor building is leaning dangerously to one side and could collapse at any time releasing more than two hundred times more radiation than Chernobyl. This will make Japan uninhabitable and affect every person on the planet. A must read for anyone who is concerned about the future of this planet.

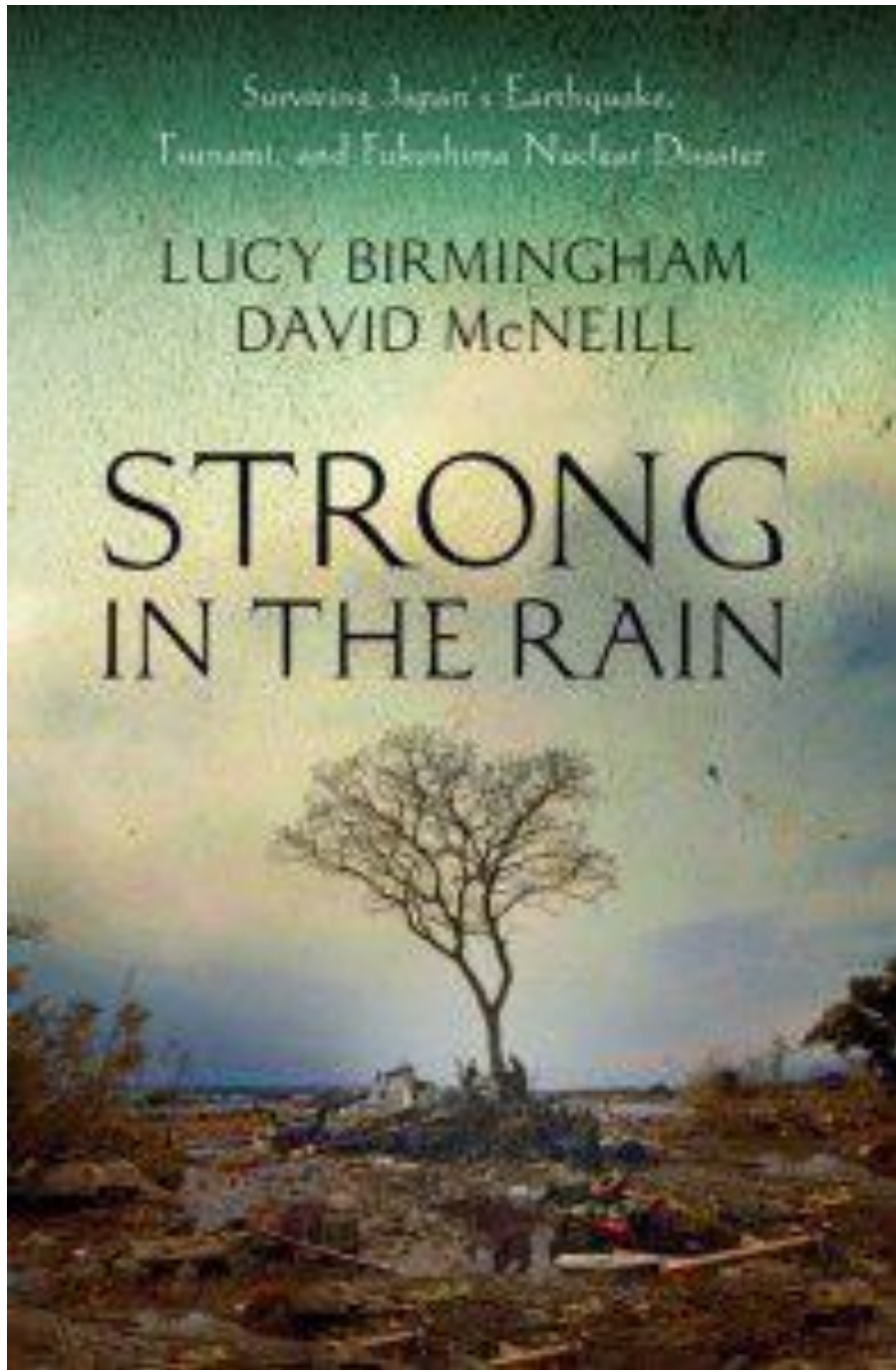


July 2012

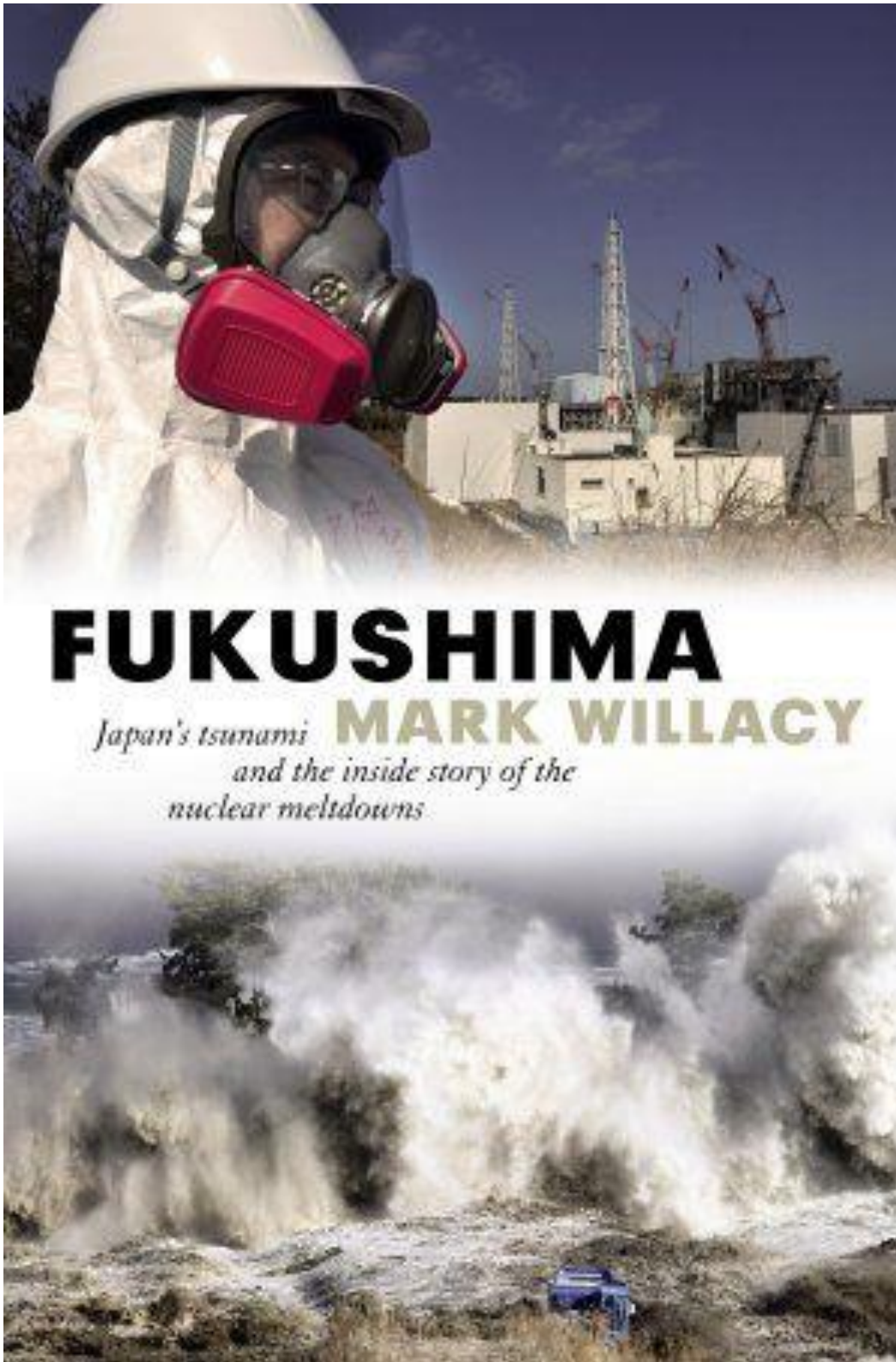
Not long ago, the U.S. Public Health Service revealed that only one point five percent (1.5%) of all Americans were healthy. So it is no wonder Americans rank 31st in the world for life expectancy, suffer the 7th highest cancer rate among all countries, and rank behind no less than 40 countries that have lower infant mortality rates. This begs the question: Why? Prior to 1952, the mortality rate from all sources was dramatically declining. After 1952 this dramatic decline lost its steam. In fact, in some years, startling mortality escalations (especially for the 25 to 44 age group) occurred despite unprecedented advances in U.S. healthcare. So, what happened? Well, to be pithy, in 1952 radioactive fallout was unleashed in earnest. We now know that deficiencies and toxins in our food supply and environment are at fault. The National Cancer Institute has determined that 80% of our cancers arise from the air we breathe, the food we eat and the water we drink. Regardless of the toxin or disease, tiny amounts of absorbed radioactive particles greatly amplify their toll on the human body. As far back as the 1960's, no less than three Nobel Prize winners warned us as about the consequences of man-made radiation. But we did not listen. The National Research Council's 2006 BEIR VII Report tells us point blank that there is no safe level of radiation exposure. Instead we keep buying into the hype and promise of cheap, clean, limitless electrical nuclear power. But the reality has always been net higher costs well hidden from the public view. The nuclear power conversation rarely includes the lost quality of life and healthcare costs associated with radioactive exposures inherent to running the technology. Radioactive fallout now abounds in the food chain of the Northern Hemisphere. The health threat is greatest to those living near nuclear power plants as well as those exposed to fallout from nuclear accidents. No one who lives in the path of radioactive fallout is spared the direst transgenerational health consequences. In stark contrast to this picture are the typically lower mortality rates in developed countries that decided to forego nuclear power entirely. In Fukushima Meltdown & Modern Radiation: Protecting Ourselves and Future Generations, Dr. Apsley provides an easy and clear synopsis covering the most critical historical issues arising from man-made radiation crises. In a nut shell, ionizing radiation rapidly melts away our immunity and genetic integrity. Like an insatiable immortal fox forever positioned to pounce toxic radioactive particles linger in the environment for centuries and even millennia. Obviously normal healing mechanisms will not spare the human race from this perennial scourge. Prevention from future exposure is essential, but by itself will not be enough. What we need most are cutting edge techniques that effectively and rapidly regenerate our tissues. From his over 30 years of experience in the field of regenerative medicine, Dr. Apsley lays out precise step-by-step individualized nutritional methods to accomplish regeneration. For example, his method incorporates fast and easy-to-make delicious smoothies. He also includes many other enjoyable menu selections designed to induce regenerative healing. Both Dr. Apsley's insights on the nature of the radiation threat and his approach to solving the resulting damage are supported with the book's approximately 460 peer-reviewed citations and approximately 85 authoritative references.

Blending history, science, and gripping storytelling, *Strong in the Rain* brings the 9.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Japan in 2011 and its immediate aftermath to life through the eyes of the men and women who experienced it. Following the narratives of six individuals, the book traces the shape of a disaster and the heroics it prompted, including that of David Chumreonglert, a Texan with Thai roots, trapped in his school's gymnasium with hundreds of students and teachers as it begins to flood, and Taro Watanabe, who thought nothing of returning to the Fukushima plant to fight the nuclear disaster, despite the effects that he knew would stay with him for the rest of his life. This is a beautifully written and

moving account of how the Japanese experienced one of the worst earthquakes in history and endured its horrific consequences.



July 2013

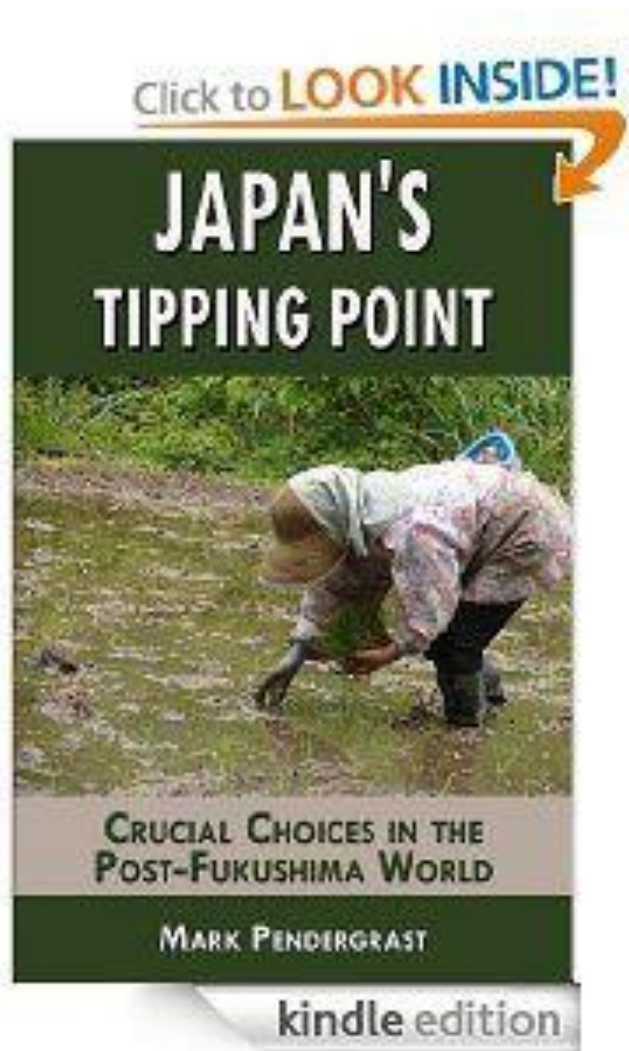


On 11 March 2011, Japan was rocked by the most violent earthquake in her history and one of the largest ever recorded. The quake itself was just the start of a chain of disastrous events, creating a massive tsunami that slammed the shores of north eastern Japan. Close to 20,000 people were killed or disappeared under waves that reached more than 40 metres high as they smashed their way several kilometres inland.

Yet the greatest damage was caused when the tsunami surged over the seawall of Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear power station, resulting in a multiple core meltdown that released vast quantities of radioactivity into the atmosphere and ocean. At one stage it even threatened the evacuation and irradiation of Tokyo itself, which would have spelt the end of Japan as we know it.

See also :

<http://fukushima-is-still-news.over-blog.com/article-fukushima-by-mark-willacy-119287836.html>



October 4, 2011

Japan's Tipping Point is a small book on a huge topic. In the post-Fukushima era, Japan is the "canary in the coal mine" for the rest of the world. Can Japan radically shift its energy policy, become greener, more self-sufficient, and avoid catastrophic impacts on the climate? Mark Pendergrast arrived in Japan exactly two months after the Fukushima meltdown. This book is his eye-opening account of his trip and his alarming conclusions.

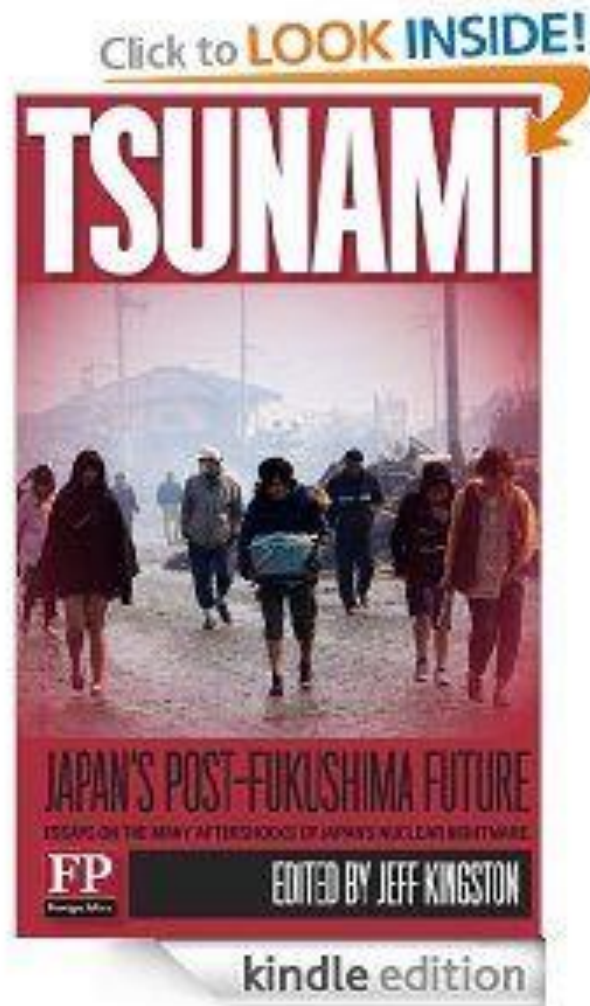
Japan is at a crucial tipping point. A developed country that must import all of its fossil fuel, it can no longer rely on nuclear power, following the massive earthquake/tsunami/nuclear disaster of March 11, 2011. Critically acclaimed nonfiction writer Mark Pendergrast went to Japan to investigate Japan's renewable energy, Eco-Model Cities, food policy, recycling, and energy conservation, expecting to find innovative, cutting edge programs.

He discovered that he had been naive. The Japanese boast of their eco-services for eco-products in eco-cities. Yet they rely primarily on imported fossil fuel and nuclear power, live in energy-wasteful homes, and import 60% of their food. That may be changing in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Maybe. But as Pendergrast documents, Japan lags far behind Europe, the United States, and even (in some respects) China in terms of renewable energy efforts. And Japan is mired in bureaucracy, political infighting, indecision, puffery, public apathy, and cultural attitudes that make rapid change difficult.

Yet Japan is also one of the most beautiful countries in the world, with friendly, resilient people who can, when motivated, pull together to accomplish incredible things.

As an island nation, Japan offers a microcosmic look at the problems facing the rest of the globe. And as Japan tips, so may the world.

Mark Pendergrast, the author of books such as *For God, Country and Coca-Cola*, *Uncommon Grounds*, and *Inside the Outbreaks*, entertains as he enlightens. As he wrote in *Japan's Tipping Point*: "The rest of this account might seem a strange combination of critical analysis, travelogue, absurdist non-fiction, and call to action. It might be called 'Mark's Adventures in Japanland: Or, Apocalyptic Visions in a Noodle Shop.'"



June 28, 2011

Featuring the world's leading Japan watchers. From haunting scenes in the hot zone to the nuclear, political, and economic future of a battered land. Proceeds to benefit the Japan Society's tsunami relief fund.

"For the 20 years before this great earthquake disaster, our nation has seemed, in many ways, to be at an impasse. As we overcome the crisis created by this disaster, we must also overcome the preceding crisis, what could be called Japan's structural crisis." — Naoto Kan

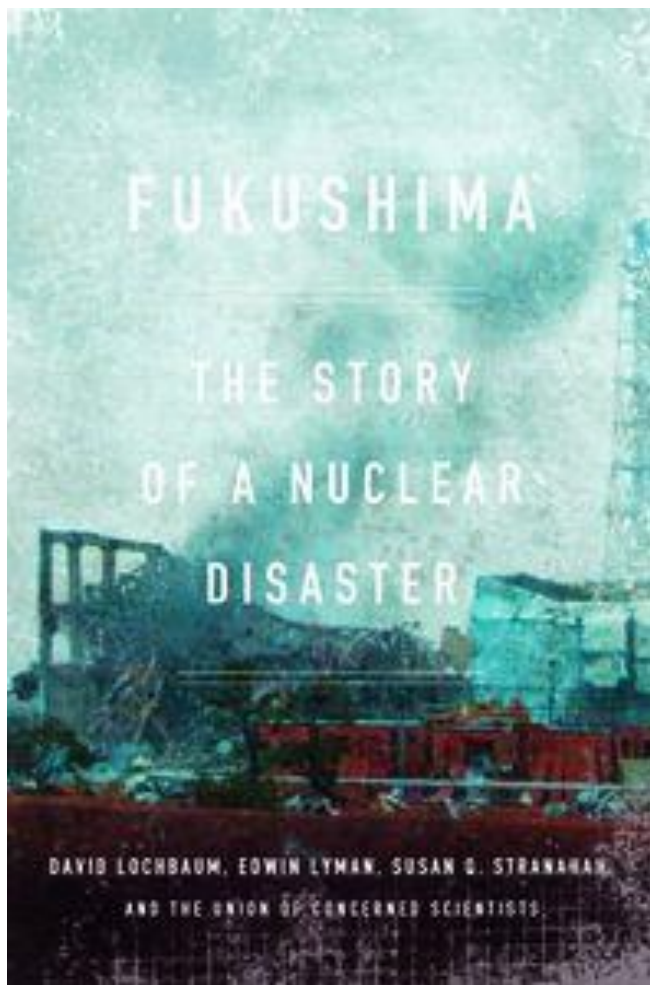
On March 11, 2011, Japan's northern coast was shaken by the biggest earthquake ever to strike the island in recorded history. With a gigantic tsunami and the nuclear meltdown that followed, 3/11 was the worst disaster to hit the developed world for a hundred years. Confronted with tough questions about its dependence on nuclear power, about the competence of its leaders both in the private and public sectors, about the economy's ability to rebound from a shock, the country has been plunged into crisis. After centuries of earthquakes, tsunamis, war, and a long list of other disasters, natural and unnatural, the Japanese people are accustomed to building back stronger -- but how do they recover from such a

devastating blow, and what will that new future look like?

This unique Foreign Policy ebook, the first to respond to the quake in such depth, assembles an exclusive collection of top writers and scholars working in Japan today to answer these questions. Edited by Temple University's Jeff Kingston, it showcases some of Japan's leading writers and thinkers, from prominent journalists like Financial Times Asia-Pacific editor David Pilling to former Economist editor Bill Emmott to best-selling author Robert Whiting.

Buy it now and support the Japan Society, which will send proceeds directly to tsunami relief efforts on Japan's northern coast.

Fall 2013



It's been over thirty years since a reactor in the United States melted down. Some believe this indicates that all safety problems have been addressed and no challenges remain. That's not "mission accomplished," it's just plain luck. The Japanese thought the same thing until their luck ran out.

—FROM *FUKUSHIMA*

On March 11, 2011, an earthquake large enough to knock the earth from its axis sent a massive tsunami speeding toward the Japanese coast and the aging and vulnerable Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power reactors. Over the following weeks, the world watched in horror as a natural disaster became a man-made catastrophe: fail-safes failed, cooling systems shut down, nuclear rods melted.

In the first definitive account of the Fukushima disaster, two leading experts from the Union of Concerned Scientists, David Lochbaum and Edwin Lyman, team up with journalist Susan Q. Stranahan, the lead reporter of the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of the Three Mile Island accident, to tell this harrowing story. *Fukushima* combines a fast-paced, riveting account of the tsunami and the nuclear emergency it created with an explanation of the science and technology behind the meltdown as it unfolded in real time. Bolstered by photographs, explanatory diagrams, and a comprehensive glossary, the narrative also extends to other severe nuclear accidents to address both the terrifying question of whether it could happen elsewhere and how such a crisis can be averted in the future.

David Lochbaum is the head of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Nuclear Safety Project and author of *Nuclear Waste Disposal Crisis*. He lives in Chattanooga. **Edwin Lyman** is a senior scientist in the Global Security Program of the Union of Concerned Scientists. He lives in Washington, D.C. **Susan Q. Stranahan** is the author of *Susquehanna: River of Dreams*. She lives in Maine. **The Union of Concerned Scientists** is the leading science-based nonprofit working for a healthy environment and a safer world.

The Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011 led Japan, and many other countries, to change their energy policies. Following Germany's example, some adopted nuclear phase-out plans, focusing instead on renewable energy. Even heavily nuclear-reliant France began to consider a phase-out, and some developing countries in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific area rethought their nuclear plans. David Elliott reviews the disaster and its global impacts, looking in detail at public and governmental reactions as the scale of the disaster became clear, and at the social, environmental, economic, technological and political implications in Japan and worldwide. He asks whether growing opposition to nuclear power around the world spells the end of the global nuclear renaissance.

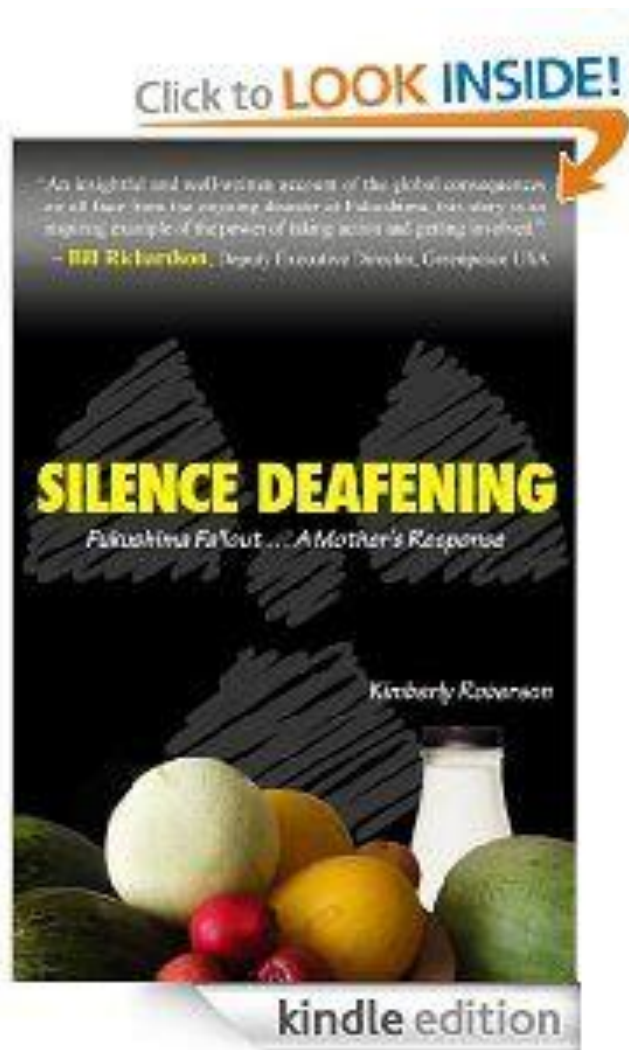
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FUKUSHIMA

Impacts and
Implications

David Elliott





March 8, 2012

Nuclear Disasters and Lessons Learned... A Mother's Response

Facts are facts. There have been at least three major nuclear power disasters to date: Three Mile Island in 1979, Chernobyl in 1986, and now Fukushima Daiichi in 2011... and there are many more smaller nuclear accidents and near misses every year. Do we wait for another catastrophic event, or do we act now?

Nuclear fallout is a harmful and mysterious tragedy that we can't see, taste, hear, smell or feel. Rather than recoil in fear from Fukushima Daiichi, it really only serves to empower us into further action. This book is a mother's account of dealing with radioactive fallout from the Fukushima Daiichi disaster, the worst in world history. This book speaks to the urgent need for food monitoring, conservation and renewable energy, as radiation from nuclear power is now migrating into our homes and kitchens.

In 'Silence Deafening, Fukushima Fallout ... A Mother's Response,' Ms Roberson writes, "The silence after the earthquake, nuclear meltdown and tsunamis AF (after Fukushima) was truly deafening and unlike anything I had experienced before. Surreal, 'Twilight Zone' comparisons were hard to avoid. Knowing what I knew, and then seeing those facts be so thoroughly disregarded by the media and elected officials had begun to take on a sort of nightmare quality."

Ms. Roberson pulls from her experiences in environmental activism, nutrition and motherhood to alert us to the dangers of radioactive fallout in U.S. topsoil, ground water, produce and dairy resulting from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. She asserts, "The one thing such experience brings that is startlingly clear to me: radioactive fallout from nuclear power and food do not mix, and children are especially at risk." She makes a strong case for protecting California agriculture, currently the 5th largest producer in the world, not only in halting plans for the next generation of nuclear reactors but going one step further in calling for immediate transitioning from nuclear power to renewable energy before another nuclear disaster happens.

Review: *Silence Deafening, Fukushima Fallout... A Mother's Response*

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/karl-grossman/silence-deafening-fukushima-fallout_b_1856817.html

Amid the cover-up of the Fukushima nuclear power disaster, the title of Kimberly Roberson's book rings so unfortunately true: *Silence Deafening, Fukushima Fallout... A Mother's Response*.

It's relatively brief at 69 pages but gets to the heart of the catastrophe: the meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant complex in 2010, the months and months of discharges of radioactivity -- and the silence of media and public officials.

"The silence after the earthquake, nuclear meltdowns and tsunamis AF [After Fukushima] was truly deafening and unlike anything I had experienced before. Surreal *Twilight Zone* comparisons were hard to avoid," she writes. "Knowing what I knew, and then seeing those facts to be so thoroughly disregarded by the media and elected officials has begun to take on a sort of nightmare quality."

"It may take decades for the true magnitude of Fukushima Daiichi to be comprehended, just as the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown of 1986 are still being realized," she continues. "This is the story of my attempt to learn the truth, and then to do something about it in my own small way."

The book, published by VisionTalk, is very personal and written from a mother's perspective. Roberson is also well-educated about the horrors of nuclear technology.

She relates how, working for Greenpeace in Washington, D.C. in 1986, she opened a "letter from the farmer near the Chernobyl nuclear disaster who had mailed us pictures of grossly deformed farm animals. Those images would later appear in magazines like *TIME* and *Newsweek* and helped to open the world's eyes to the largest nuclear disaster to date."

She writes about a main consequence of pollution from radioactivity and other sources -- cancer -- and how "it's reached epidemic proportions."

As to the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster, she tells of the English version of the landmark book, *Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment*, published by the New York Academy of Sciences 25 years after the accident -- with the horrible consequences manifesting. The book, written by a team of European scientists led by Dr. Alexey Yablokov of Russia, concludes that based on

available medical data, nearly one million people around the world died as a result of fall-out from Chernobyl.

"At Chernobyl," Roberson writes, "there was one reactor affected" while "at Fukushima there are four, and workers are still struggling to contain radiation there as of this writing nearly one year after the disaster began March 11."

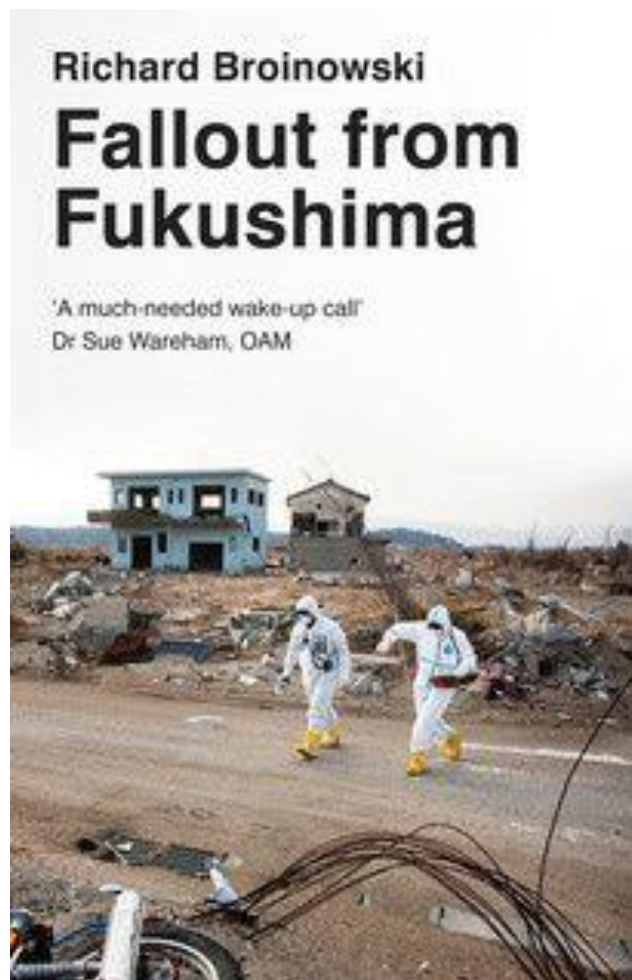
The book is studded with breaks for quotes such as that from Gandhi: "First they laugh at you, then they ignore you, then they fight you, then you win." Winning over nuclear power is still far off, however. Roberson writes how in Spring 2011, "Apart from the occasional Internet bombshell... the deafening media silence around Fukushima raged on."

She, however, has been taking action -- which she writes about. There is a petition campaign and, with the findings of radioactivity in her home state of California, the creation of the Fukushima Fallout Awareness Network.

"While young children, the elderly and immune deficient are at particular risk, the Fukushima Daiichi will affect us all globally for generations to come just as at Chernobyl," Roberson writes. "One thing we do know is that we are at a crossroads with nuclear power."

Roberson's book helps in choosing a direction: away from this lethal technology.

September 26, 2012

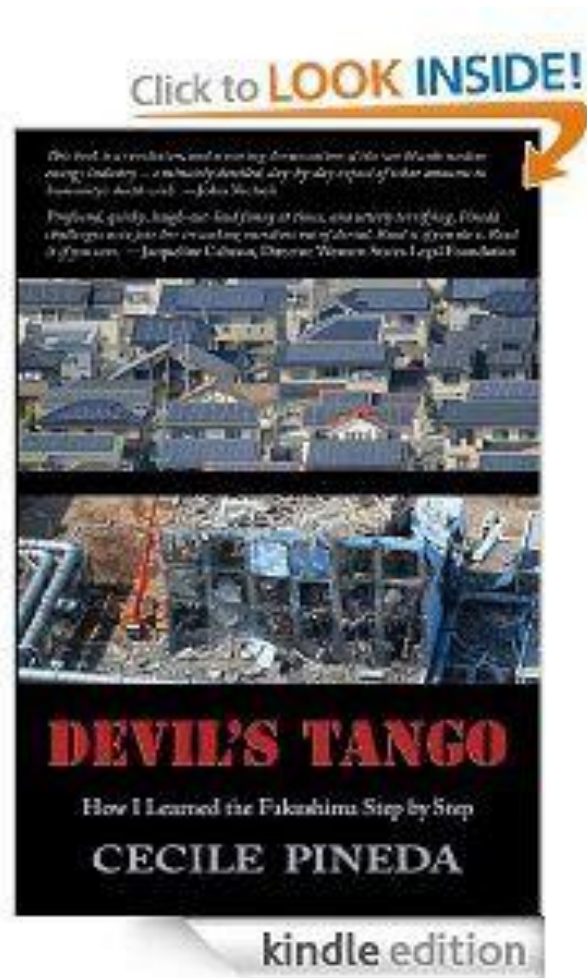


On a calm afternoon in March 2011, a force-nine earthquake jolted the Pacific Ocean seabed east of Japan. Forty minutes later, a tsunami 21 metres high crashed onto the coast of Fukushima, Miyagi, and Iwate prefectures. Towns collapsed, villages were destroyed, and 16,000 people were swept away. The earthquake and tsunami also resulted in another terrifying calamity — explosions and meltdowns at a nuclear plant near the city of Fukushima.

Fallout from Fukushima tells the story of Japan's worst nuclear disaster, and the attempts to suppress, downplay, and obscure its consequences. Former diplomat Richard Broinowski travelled into the irradiated zone to speak to those affected and to find out why authorities delayed warning the public about the severity of the radiation. Combining interviews, research, and analysis, he reveals the extent of the disaster's consequences: the ruinous compensation claims faced by electricity supplier TEPCO; the complete shutdown of Japan's nuclear reactors; and the psychological impact on those who, unable to return to their farms and villages, may become permanent nuclear refugees.

In this illuminating and persuasive account, Broinowski puts this nuclear tragedy in context, tracing the path back through Tokyo, Three Mile Island, and Chernobyl. Examining what the disaster will mean for the international nuclear industry, he explores why some countries are abandoning nuclear power, while others — including Australia, through its export of uranium — continue to put their faith in this dangerous technology.

March 1, 2012



Devil's Tango is a one-woman whirlwind tour of the nuclear industry, seen through the lens of the industrial and planetary crisis unfolding at Fukushima Daiichi. As much personal journal as investigative journalism, the author's journal entries trace her own and the country's evolution of consciousness during the first year following the disaster at Fukushima Daiichi. Pineda keeps track day-by-day of worsening developments at Fukushima Daiichi, and records the daily evolution of her perceptions. Often poetic in tone, philosophic in scope, her reflections are peppered with dramatic monologues, day-to-day reportage, philosophical speculations, meditations, deep song (canto hondo) and occasional flights of fancy, a monoplay, a grand guignol. There is no other book quite like it. John Nichols calls it an "astonishing anatomy of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster," "... a revelation, and a searing denunciation of the worldwide nuclear energy industry."

See first list established on May 19, 2012:

<http://fukushima-is-still-news.over-blog.com/article-books-on-fukushima-105457772.html>

Books on Fukushima

I "pinched" this idea of making a list of books on Fukushima from Pierre Fetet's blog. Those interested in reading books in French can check the following page :

<http://fukushima.over-blog.fr/article-des-livres-sur-fukushima-105303511.html>

Cyber-attack against antinukes (3)

November 11, 2013

Networks nearly incapacitated as millions of messages flood in

Deluge of harassing emails angers anti-nuclear groups

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/11/11/national/deluge-of-harassing-emails-angers-anti-nuclear-groups/#.UoEyQiewT9k>

by Tomohiro Osaki
Staff Writer

Anti-nuclear activists expressed outrage Monday over cyberattacks involving a torrent of harassing emails that have nearly crippled their online activities.

Yasue Ashihara, a member of Sayonara Shimane Genpatsu Network (Goodbye-Nuke Network in Shimane), said the group received about 10,000 emails in mid-September, some of which contained hateful remarks such as: “without the massacre of anti-nuclear activists, the world will see no peace.” But most messages turned out to be fake confirmations of new memberships, she said.

Noting the cyberattacks mainly targeted anti-nuclear civic groups, Ashihara said she believes whoever masterminded the harassment clearly supports atomic power. “Whoever may have perpetrated this, I consider the acts very cowardly. If someone has something to say, just say it,” Ashihara said.

Hideki Hayashi, who heads the Hokuriku chapter of Fukushima Genpatsu Kokusodan (Fukushima Nuclear Accusers), meanwhile, said the group was deluged with approximately 1.5 million blank emails between Sept. 19 and 30. The inundation left him temporarily unable to keep track of other important messages addressed to his organization, and nearly incapacitated his personal computer.

“Since we’ve been involved in anti-nuclear activism for a while, we’re sort of used to this kind of harassment,” Hayashi said, adding his fellow nuclear foes have routinely endured other torments, including being sent expensive merchandise they were later asked to pay for.

“But what we worry about is this harassment against us may discourage members of the general public from joining our movement,” Hayashi said.

The group’s Fukushima chapter suffered similar harassment, rendering it almost dysfunctional, said member Miwa Chiwaki. Her group was deluged with about 140,000 messages from mid-September through mid-October, most in the guise of confirmation emails thanking it for joining other fellow anti-

nuclear groups. Deleting and blocking the harassing emails severely disrupted her organization's normal routine, she added.

Lawyer Ryo Nakagawa, who along with colleague Yuichi Kaido co-represents anti-nuclear civic groups nationwide, said his team is considering filing a criminal complaint against the party perpetrating the harassment.

Authorities could regard such harassment as interference in a business activity, Nakagawa said.

According to Kyodo News, at least 33 civic groups nationwide, most of them anti-nuclear, have been hit by cyberattacks swamping them with a combined 2.53 million harassing emails since mid-September. The harassing party is using the software Tor to exploit computer systems that automatically send confirmation emails to people registering for online newsletters or making inquiries, after apparently obtaining the email addresses of the civic groups.

What should one make of Koizumi's anti-nuclear stance?

November 13, 2013

Still the maverick, anti-nuclear Koizumi baffles LDP leaders, utilities

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201311130068>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The ruling party is getting increasingly annoyed, the electric power industry is worried, and opposition parties see an opportunity.

But they all appear unwilling or unable to take a bold move, wondering if former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has an underlying motive for his repeated calls for Japan to immediately abandon nuclear power.

Koizumi, 71, launched his latest salvo, **an hourlong anti-nuclear speech Nov. 12, at a packed Japan National Press Club in Tokyo.**

His target was clear: the man he had handpicked to succeed him as prime minister in 2006.

Koizumi mentioned Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's name six times during the speech.

"If Abe set a policy to close down all nuclear power plants, opponents of anti-nuclear power (within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party) would not be able to object," Koizumi said.

Although government and LDP leaders have called Koizumi potentially "troublesome" in their plans to restart nuclear reactors to underpin the economy, they have largely avoided a head-on clash with the former prime minister, who remains widely popular in Japan.

About an hour after the Nov. 12 session--Koizumi's first with reporters since he retired from politics--Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga only emphasized the importance for the government to promote a "responsible" energy policy.

LDP Secretary-General Shigeru Ishiba tried to play down the differences in opinion between the ruling party and Koizumi.

"(The LDP) seeks to reduce Japan's reliance on nuclear power, so we are heading to a direction he is eyeing," he said.

Abe, 59, who has called for an eventual easing of Japan's reliance on nuclear power generation, responded to earlier anti-nuclear statements by his "master teacher in politics" on a TV news show broadcast on Nov. 9.

"It will be irresponsible for me to promise now to completely abandon nuclear power," he said.

However, pro-nuclear members of the LDP are showing increasing signs that they are fed up with Koizumi's calls to rid Japan of nuclear energy. Even a close ally during his reign as prime minister from 2001 to 2006 was put off by his arguments.

"I believe that Koizumi should be credited with raising the question (about the nuclear policy), but he reached the wrong conclusion," said Hiroyuki Hosoda, executive acting secretary-general who heads a group of lawmakers lobbying for reactor restarts. "Relying on fossil fuels will escalate global warming. The prevailing tide in the world is not about emotion, but about scientific grounds."

Hosoda was chief Cabinet secretary in the Koizumi administration.

Koizumi lived up to his “maverick” politician moniker as prime minister, using such unorthodox tactics as promising to “destroy” his faction-dominated LDP, pushing through his postal privatization plan despite opposition from party heavyweights, and fielding “assassin” candidates to defeat his enemies in elections.

His repeated anti-nuclear declarations, and his increasing pressure on Abe and Japanese lawmakers, have fueled speculation that Koizumi may re-enter the political arena.

On Nov. 12, Koizumi said that Abe, as the nation’s top leader, can wield his authority for a “grand project” to phase out nuclear energy and pursue renewable energy sources.

The former prime minister also said that most parties and many LDP lawmakers actually oppose the Abe administration’s push to restart nuclear reactors.

“The LDP is the only party objecting (to a break with nuclear power generation), but I believe that half of its politicians are opposed (to the party policy line) in their heart,” he said.

Koizumi acknowledged that some politicians have suggested that he establish a new party under the anti-nuclear banner or join a political force working for the cause.

But he stopped short of committing himself.

“We should work on our own,” he said.

Anti-nuclear calls in Japan have faded since large demonstrations were held around the country following the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

The government is now set to restart reactors if they meet the new safety guidelines of the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry is expected to soon draw up the new Basic Energy Plan based on the premise that the nation will continue to rely on nuclear power as a key energy source.

Koizumi has rekindled interest in the anti-nuclear movement, and opposition parties see him as a chance to chip away at the public support of the ruling coalition, which controls both chambers of the Diet.

“We have something in common (with Koizumi),” said Kazuo Shii, leader of the Japanese Communist Party.

But with Koizumi showing no commitment to return to politics, the opposition parties cannot use the former prime minister to galvanize their forces.

LDP politicians opposed to nuclear power are also having a tough time.

Taro Kono, a Lower House member known for his anti-nuclear stance, and new Diet members from urban constituencies have set up a study group to reassess Japan’s nuclear power policy, including the program to recycle spent nuclear fuel. They have yet to represent a meaningful force within the ruling party.

Officials in the electric power industry, concerned that Koizumi’s popularity could refuel public opinion against nuclear power, criticized his Nov. 12 speech.

“I am wondering about the basis for his arguments,” said a senior official with a leading utility. “I don’t think his stance is based on an understanding of Japan’s energy situation.”

The bottom lines of electric utilities were hit hard after their reactors were shut down following the Fukushima nuclear accident.

However, five of the nation’s 10 regional utilities reported pretax profits in their half-year financial results ending September due to higher electricity rates. They said they need to restart their idled reactors as soon as possible to ensure stable electricity supplies.

According to one estimate, restarting a single reactor will allow an electric power company to save 100 billion yen (\$1 billion) annually in the costs for fossil fuels to run thermal power plants.

Some senior utility officials warned that they might have to raise electricity rates again if the nation’s reactors remain idle.

The business community, however, is not necessarily united over the push to bring reactors online.

Young leaders, such as Hiroshi Mikitani, CEO of online retailer Rakuten Inc., and Takeshi Niinami, president and CEO of convenience store chain Lawson Inc., expressed their reservations about restarting reactors at a meeting of the government's Industrial Competitiveness Council in March.

Kikujiro Fukushima to write about Fukushima

November 16, 2013

92-year-old journalist motivated to write again by Fukushima crisis

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131116p2a00m0na007000c.html>

In the 160-centimeter-tall, 36-kilogram frame of 92-year-old Kikujiro Fukushima burns a journalistic passion.

I first visited Fukushima at his house in Yanai, Yamaguchi Prefecture, in the summer of 2007. At the time, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was serving his first term, was touting his "beautiful country" slogan. That same summer, the defense minister resigned after implying that the atomic bombing of Japan was inevitable.

I remember Fukushima angrily saying at the time that if those in power imposed their self-righteous values on the people, Japan would return to a path of mistakes.

Since then, every time I have met Fukushima, his words have made me think.

"If you hide in safety in the name of impartiality of the press, you will not learn the truth," he once said to me. On another occasion he told me, "If you don't go to the site of an event and face the people involved, you can't take any pictures, or write an article that will touch people."

Fukushima previously worked as a photographer, but he traded in his camera for the written word, and went on to release three books on postwar Japan. Eventually he retired from the world of journalism, but that was before the disasters of March 2011 reignited his journalistic desire. Worried that "the mistakes of Hiroshima would be repeated," he headed to Fukushima Prefecture accompanied by younger photographers.

In the disaster-hit prefecture, the same kinds of tragedies that had plagued the Hiroshima victims he talked to had resurfaced: farmers robbed of the land passed down from their ancestors, people worried about the effects of radiation on their children and grandchildren and the discrimination that could arise.

Now the fall of 2013 has arrived, and a second Abe administration, this time proposing the creation of a "strong country," has been born. Lies and cover-ups about the Fukushima nuclear disaster have come to light, and a push to restart the country's idled nuclear reactors continues.

When I visited Fukushima's home again, I found him sitting at his desk.

"Both this word processor and I are nearing the end of our lives. I always start out with a prayer that it will run properly," he said.

"What's most important is to not ignore things that are troublesome or inconvenient, to think for yourself, and to start from where you can," he told me. He added that he wanted to protest against the pro-nuclear stance.

"I want to live a little longer and write a book linking Fukushima and Hiroshima," he said. "There are still things I have left to write." (By Shinya Hagio, City News Department)

800 join lawsuit for suspension of Oi plant

December 3, 2013

More than 800 join suit to seek suspension of Oi nuclear plant

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131203p2g00m0dm074000c.html>

KYOTO (Kyodo) -- More than 800 people joined a lawsuit Tuesday filed last year by 1,100 plaintiffs from 17 prefectures demanding the central government and Kansai Electric Power Co. shut down the utility's Oi nuclear power plant.

The plaintiffs also demanded the government and Kansai Electric pay damages of 10,000 yen per person per month until the Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture, western Japan, is suspended, arguing an accident there would cause irrevocable damage and violate their right to live safely.

The suit was filed with the Kyoto District Court last November.

The plaintiffs said they will continue soliciting more people to join the suit.

Lawsuits to seek suspension of the Oi plant are also pending at the Fukui and Osaka district courts.

All of Japan's 50 commercial reactors are currently offline. About a dozen of them are being checked by the Nuclear Regulation Authority as part of the process toward resuming their operations.

"Sea change for Onuma"

December 5, 2013

Man who saw the future in nuclear energy converts to solar power

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201312040072>

By KOSUKE SO/ Staff Writer

A huge banner hanging at the entrance of a shopping area in the evacuated town of Futaba, co-host to the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, still reads “Nuclear energy is the energy of a bright future.”

Yuji Onuma created this slogan while in elementary school and won the best prize at a contest organized by the town government in 1987.

Today, Onuma, 37, sees a bright future in a life built around solar power, 1,000 days after being forced to leave his home and his business following the nuclear accident that unfolded on March 11, 2011.

The conversion marks a sea change for Onuma, as nuclear power had dominated large parts of his life as the economic lifeline of Futaba.

The nuclear disaster came after he had long believed in a “bright future” with nuclear energy, just like everyone else in Futaba. But now his hometown may have been lost, perhaps forever, after a triple meltdown at the plant.

“I realized that I was wrong (about a future with nuclear energy) after the nuclear disaster took my hometown away,” said Onuma, who fled Futaba with his expectant wife, Serina, after the accident. “I will probably never be able to go home.”

Futaba, with a population of about 7,000 before the crisis, has been designated an area where residents will not be allowed to return to live until at least 2017 due to annual radiation exposure levels of 50 millisieverts or more.

He has started to rebuild his family's life at its new home in neighboring Ibaraki Prefecture with the resolve never to return to a life relying on nuclear power. He's also embarking on a solo campaign to drive home the dangers of atomic energy.

On Nov. 28, Onuma left for Koga, Ibaraki Prefecture, to settle in his new residence with his wife, their 2-year-old son and their 6-month-old son. Until then, he and his family had evacuated to Anjo, Aichi Prefecture, in central Japan, where his relatives lived.

Onuma is intent on generating electricity via renewable sources.

"I want to rid Japan of nuclear power plants some day by promoting the use of renewables," he said.

His new home, a two-story wooden structure, comes with 54 solar panels capable of supplying enough electricity for his family's needs.

He is also preparing to install solar panels on land encompassing 1,700 square meters in Ishioka, Ibaraki Prefecture, and Sakura, Tochigi Prefecture, to sell power.

His new life is a far cry from the one he led back in Futaba.

After the two reactors located in the town went into service in the late 1970s, he saw many of his neighbors, relatives and classmates landing jobs with Tokyo Electric Power Co., the plant operator, and its affiliates.

He harbored some doubts about nuclear energy after the Chernobyl accident in 1986, but it was taboo for townspeople to express anxieties about nuclear energy, not to mention criticizing it.

"I came to think that it would be a wise approach to live with the nuclear power plant," Onuma recalled.

He even took advantage of the fact that Futaba was thriving with money flowing into the town thanks to TEPCO.

While working for a real estate company, he had two apartment buildings built near his home in 2005 and 2008 to rent out.

One of the buildings housed all-electric apartments, a first in the town. He set their rent higher than that for other apartments in the neighborhood. Of the six all-electric apartments, four were rented to TEPCO employees.

About a year after the nuclear crisis, he began pondering how to rebuild his life and decided to make a fresh start for his family in Koga, where his mother was hospitalized, by buying a new home there.

During his housing search, he learned from an official with a home builder about the feed-in-tariff system the government introduced in 2012 to promote renewable energy.

Under the arrangement, electric utilities are obliged to purchase electricity generated from renewable sources by companies and individuals at fixed rates. He decided to pursue solar power generation for additional income, after subsisting on compensation from TEPCO and unemployment payments.

Driven to action, Onuma thought it important for the public to see the enormous risks involved in nuclear power generation after the Fukushima disaster. He participated in anti-nuclear demonstrations outside the prime minister's office in Tokyo and in rallies in Nagoya.

In December 2012, he was alarmed by the Liberal Democratic Party's return to power after the Lower House election.

The LDP has pushed for nuclear power generation for decades, and the party's landslide victory appeared to him that the public's focus has shifted from the nuclear crisis to economic growth.

The changing political landscape spurred him to continue raising his voice against nuclear power even if it meant acting alone. In January, Onuma, clad in protective clothing against radioactive materials, protested in front of the TEPCO main office in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward, holding up a sign declaring "No Nukes."

Although he knows that he will not be able to live in Futaba again, he and his wife continue with their monthly visits lasting only several hours each time to their former home in the town.

Onuma said he is dreaming of paying a pilgrimage to the graves of their ancestors with his two children one day.

"I want to tell my children and future generations about my hometown," he said.

Has M. Abe forgotten the tragedy of Fukushima?

December 10, 2013

Editorial: Return to nuclear dependency unacceptable

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20131210p2a00m0na020000c.html>

Is the Abe administration trying to pretend that the tragedy in Fukushima never happened?

In a national energy plan drafted by the government that would provide the guidelines for the country's mid- to long-term energy policy, the Abe administration has reversed the previous Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration's line of abolishing nuclear power, and instead placed a clear emphasis on the use of nuclear power.

The safety myth of nuclear power has been destroyed. There are questions about the economic efficiency of nuclear energy. Furthermore, we have no clue how to deal with the issue of nuclear waste disposal. We must break away from our reliance on nuclear power. We cannot accept the government's switch in policy.

The draft of the Basic Energy Plan was released following deliberations by a Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry panel. The government aims to complete the plan before the end of the year, and obtain Cabinet approval early next year.

A review of the government's energy plan was prompted by the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. The DPJ administration drafted last year what it called the Innovative Strategy for Energy and the Environment, which would serve as the basis for the new plan, and announced that it would inject all available policy resources toward the goal of stopping all nuclear reactors by the 2030s. The DPJ also decided that to reach this goal, it would not permit nuclear reactors to run for longer than 40 years, and to ban the construction of new reactors.

Calling nuclear power an "important source of energy," the LDP's latest draft completely overturns the plan laid out by the DPJ administration. While indicating an intention to eventually reduce Japan's dependence on nuclear power, the draft also includes a clause saying that a certain level of nuclear energy will be maintained in the long term. By not including any stipulations on the construction of new nuclear facilities, the draft left room for that possibility. In other words, the administration has completely written off the "zero nuclear" policy.

As the LDP government's reasoning goes, nuclear reactors are crucial in securing a stable supply of power, containing fuel costs and putting a stop to global warming.

The rise in the utilization rate of thermal power plants to make up for the power that used to be produced by the now-halted nuclear power plants across the country, has led to a jump in the cost of fuel -- such as natural gas and oil -- by more than 3 trillion yen a year. This has led to electricity price hikes, affecting corporations and households. The argument that nuclear power is more economical than other forms of power has been a major basis for continuing the promotion of nuclear power generation.

However, with the collapse of nuclear power's safety myth, the wisdom of placing priority on short-term economic efficiency has come into question. Parts of the country stop functioning when a major disaster takes place. Massive sums of money are necessary to compensate victims and to decontaminate. Even the massive Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), operator of the stricken Fukushima plant, found itself unable to pay for all of it, and now taxpayers' money is being injected toward handling the mess. The superiority of nuclear power is predicated on such shaky grounds.

It is true that abolishing all nuclear reactors right away when fuel prices are as high as they are now could deal a blow to the domestic economy. It would therefore be ideal to limit the reactivation of nuclear plants to those facilities that have been shown to meet high safety levels, while maintaining the 40-year limit for reactor operation and prohibiting new construction of reactors in order to achieve independence from nuclear power as swiftly as possible. During that time, fuel procurement costs must be brought down and more efficient thermal power plants must be developed to keep electricity prices down.

Following the onset of the nuclear disaster, there were plans to encourage investment in highly efficient thermal power plants and renewable energy as alternatives to nuclear energy. However, the government does not indicate a goal ratio of energy sources in its preliminary energy plan draft, making it difficult for major utilities and businesses newly entering the energy field to devise investment plans. This could lead to the preservation of a system in which the parties depend on nuclear plants for the stable supply of energy.

Another issue that remains unresolved is that of where to dispose of the highly radioactive waste produced by nuclear reactors. The government's draft included a passage stating that it would take the lead toward a solution, which would entail a shift from the tactic heretofore taken of waiting for local municipalities to offer themselves up as sites for the disposal of final nuclear waste, to taking the initiative to choose candidate sites.

It is the current generation's responsibility to engage actively in finding a final disposal site for nuclear waste. However, that does not change the fact that the selection of candidate sites will be difficult. This could be used as grounds to avoid a zero nuclear policy and fend off criticism from the likes of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who likened Japan's lack of final nuclear waste disposal sites to an apartment building with no toilets.

The public will not grant its understanding for the promotion of nuclear reactor restarts if there is little to back up such a move. To solve the problem of final nuclear waste disposal as well, the government must present us with a detailed plan on how it will reduce nuclear reactors.

That the government is proposing the steady promotion of the nuclear fuel cycle in the same manner as pre-disaster times is also problematic. Japan owns 44 tons of reprocessed plutonium -- or the equivalent of 5,000 atomic bombs -- in both Japan and abroad. Continuing with a plutonium-producing nuclear fuel cycle with no way to use it could potentially raise international suspicions.

Considering the safety risks and the technological difficulties of the sodium-cooled fast-breeder reactor Monju, whose prospects for practical viability are unknown, and reprocessing plants, we should step away from the nuclear fuel cycle.

Indeed, when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe returned to power, he clearly stated that he would review the previous administration's nuclear policy. However, he also set forth a goal to establish an economic and social structure that would not have to depend on nuclear power. It was part of the election pledges made by the LDP in the lower house election last December.

The previous administration's policy took over six months of committee deliberations and public discussions to construct. We must not allow it to be dismantled so easily.

Pro-nuclear parties comprised the vast majority of the panel that compiled the LDP's draft, hinting at the possibility that the bottom line was never in question. One could say that the result has exposed the shortcomings of refusing to listen to a broad range of public opinions and leaving deliberations to a government committee. Without a willingness to truly listen to the voices of the people, the government will fail to gain confidence in its policies.

Jaczko and nuclear power

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TxqAGZOX7s>

The ongoing Fukushima Daiichi Crisis : Jaczko 9/24/2013

See also Bloomberg's page on Jaczko : <http://topics.bloomberg.com/gregory-jaczko/>

See also:

<http://atomicinsights.com/greg-jaczko-claims-nuclear-expensive-unreliables-will-take-place/>

Anti-nuke protesters in Tokyo

December 22, 2013

Protesters surround Diet building to oppose restart of nuke reactors

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201312230017>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear demonstrators rallied Dec. 22 outside the Diet building in Tokyo to oppose the government's draft of the nation's basic energy plan that lists nuclear power as an "important and fundamental base energy source."

The Abe administration is expected to approve the draft plan in early January.

"We cannot forgive the Abe administration's attempts to waste our movement," said Satoshi Kamata, a journalist who attended the protest.

The demonstrators were part of a civil group that holds protest rallies most Friday evenings outside the prime minister's office. On Dec. 22, they protested at two additional areas in central Tokyo, along with the Diet building.

Tokyo march against restarting nuclear plants

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20131222_18.html

People opposed to restarting Japan's nuclear power plants took to the streets of Tokyo on Sunday.

The march through central Tokyo was organized by civic groups against nuclear power generation.

The Abe administration plans to end the former Democratic Party government's nuclear-free energy policy and continue to utilize nuclear power generation if plant safety can be ensured.

Its new energy policy is set to be approved by the cabinet next month.

After the march, participants surrounded the Diet building and chanted such slogans as "Don't restart reactors" and "Don't create nuclear waste."

One placard read "Don't contaminate the sea," apparently referring to the continuing struggle to contain contaminated water leaks at the Fukushima Daiichi Plant.

A 69-year-old woman from Saitama Prefecture, north of Tokyo, said she is opposed to restarting nuclear

power plants or exporting them before the troubles at the Fukushima plant are resolved.

A 44-year-old father living in Tokyo said the government should decide to immediately abolish all nuclear power plants and work to promote renewable energy sources for future generations.

The organizer says 15,000 people gathered around the Diet building, while police put the figure at about 2,000.

Dec. 22, 2013 - Updated 16:32 UTC

Rediscovery of 1982 UN speech by Yamaguchi

December 31, 2013

Drafts show A-bomb survivor bridged differences in anti-nuke speech at U.N.

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201312310065



A phrase declaring "no more war" is included emphatically in the last page of the final draft for Senji Yamaguchi's historic 1982 anti-nuclear speech at a U.N. special session

By KYOSUKE YAMAMOTO/ Staff Writer

NAGASAKI--Recently discovered drafts of the historic 1982 speech that Nagasaki atomic bomb survivor Senji Yamaguchi gave at the U.N. headquarters in New York reveal how a unified and powerful message was crafted with the input of the nation's major anti-nuclear groups.

They also show that criticism of the United States and the Soviet Union, which were locked in a nuclear arms race, was deleted from the initial draft.

A worker at the secretariat of a nonprofit organization that collects and presents materials related to the atomic bombings and the hibakusha (A-bomb survivors) movement in August discovered four drafts for the speech, each representing a stage of editing. They were found in a dossier preserved at a Tokyo office of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo).

Satoru Ubuki, a Hiroshima Jogakuin University professor who has long collected materials associated with the atomic bombings, likened the drafts to a "World Heritage treasure" of the movement against atomic and hydrogen bombs.

"The anti-nuclear movement in Japan was beginning to mend its internal rifts at the time," Ubuki said. "The material is invaluable in the sense that it shows the process by which opinions of different groups were integrated and delivered in front of the world."

The drafts reveal that Yamaguchi (1930-2013), who survived the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki, had his speech polished up until the final moment. They show how he endeavored to bridge political differences to convey the sentiments of hibakusha and the inhumanity of nuclear arms to the international community.

Yamaguchi, who died in July, was 14 years old when he suffered heavy burns from the atomic bombing on his face and upper body as a student worker at an arms factory, which was only 1.1 kilometers from ground zero. He organized a youth association of Nagasaki's hibakusha in 1955 and went on to help establish the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Survivors Council, which played a central role in the hibakusha movement.

Yamaguchi became the first atomic bomb survivor to address a U.N. special session on disarmament in New York in June 1982. Holding a photo of his keloidal skin from his injuries, he told the mesmerized audience, "Please look closely at my face and hands. ... We, atomic bomb survivors, are calling out. I continue calling out as long as I am alive: No more Hiroshima, no more Nagasaki, no more war, no more hibakusha."

The anti-nuclear movement in Japan at the time was divided along political lines into various bodies, including the Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs (Gensuikin), affiliated with the opposition Social Democratic Party of Japan and the General Council of Trade Unions; and the Japan Council Against Atomic

and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo), affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party. Yamaguchi on the U.N. podium represented a "liaison council" organized by 27 similar groups.

Yoshie Kurihara, 66, who discovered the drafts, accompanied Yamaguchi to New York as a staff worker for Nihon Hidankyo. She said the text was edited on the basis of suggestions presented by leaders of different groups.

None of the four drafts is written in Yamaguchi's handwriting. The text implies the first and second drafts were written in Japan, and the third and fourth drafts were done in the United States.

The initial draft contains an assortment of different handwriting, along with traces of sheets of paper pasted together. Its text combines the drafts proposed by the different organizations.

The second draft added a statement saying that the liaison council had collected nearly 30 million signatures opposing nuclear weapons and had brought them to the United Nations. It also deleted a statement that denounced the United States and the Soviet Union in the initial draft. The Nihon Hidankyo dossier contained a document written by a liaison council official that advised against criticizing specific nations. The revision apparently factored in the suggestion.

A prototype for Yamaguchi's famous line, "No more Hiroshima, no more Nagasaki, no more hibakusha," first emerged in the third draft.

The final draft contains slashes and wavy lines, apparently indicating pauses and intonations to be made when delivering the speech, along with a scribble saying "quickly." It also added "no more war" at the end, and emphasized condemnation of war in general, rather than focusing on the damage inflicted by atomic bombs.

Yamaguchi on the podium stretched his arms wide when he said the word "war."

Kurihara said several representatives of Nihon Hidankyo and other anti-nuclear advocacy groups for peace helped prepare the final draft. But none of the three surviving members who attended that drafting session remembers who crafted the famous "no more" line.

"The phrase was probably included spontaneously, with nobody really being the trigger," Kurihara said, referring to the fact that Nihon Hidankyo at the time championed a slogan saying there should be no more hibakusha.

Mikiso Iwasa, an 84-year-old Nihon Hidankyo co-chairman who helped prepare the final draft, said Yamaguchi had fallen ill ahead of his U.S. trip and could barely remain on his feet.

"He braved his physical condition to touch the emotions of the audience," Iwasa said. "He probably told himself he must do his utmost."

Fumi Yamashita, 65, who served as Yamaguchi's simultaneous interpreter during the U.N. address, said she rehearsed the speech many times with him in a hotel room before he gave it.

"We were in a congenial mood," Yamashita said. "I never noticed he was ill."

Yoshikiyo Yoshida, an 87-year-old former representative director for Gensuikyo, said the group representatives debated hard and often clashed with each other while negotiating the text of the speech. But he said that Yamaguchi had such character that he pleaded with and convinced everyone to reconcile their differences.

"He conveyed our sentiments wonderfully beyond all differences," Yoshida said. "Nobody but Senji Yamaguchi could have given that speech."

Nuclear exports "heart-wrenching" for Mrs.Abe

December 30, 2013

First lady repeats skepticism of exporting nuclear technology

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201312300045

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Japan's first lady again questioned the wisdom of exporting nuclear technology, a pillar of the growth strategy championed by the administration of her husband, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"It remains anybody's guess if proper maintenance will be provided overseas," Akie Abe told a TV program on Dec. 29. "I wonder how Japan would cope in case of an emergency."

Akie Abe, who has called herself an “opposition within the household,” has long been openly skeptical about Japan’s export of nuclear power reactors. An opponent of nuclear power generation, she told a lecture session hosted by a nonprofit organization in June that she sees such exports as “very heart-wrenching.”

“If only alternative energy sources were available, I believe we could do away with nuclear power, although that may be difficult to come by soon,” she told the TV program. “Japan lives by its technological excellence, so I want to hold out hopes for the advent of (alternative energy) technologies.”

Is a nuclear-free Shimane possible?

January 6, 2014

Citizens seek nuclear-free Shimane

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/06/national/citizens-seek-nuclear-free-shimane/#.UsrdFrTrV1s>

by Eric Johnston
Staff Writer

Shimane Prefecture citizens seeking to enact a local ordinance that would phase out nuclear power and develop renewable energy sources have collected more than 92,000 signatures of support from registered voters, well over the minimum needed to force the governor to introduce the ordinance to the prefectural assembly.

The latest move is part of a series of attempts by citizens’ groups around the nation to pass anti-nuclear power ordinances, none of which has succeeded so far.

Kenji Nanki, a spokesman for the group pushing for the ordinance, said local governments are checking the signatures against their voter registration lists but will present them to Shimane Gov. Zenbei Mizoguchi in early February. The governor is then expected to bring the issue to the assembly.

The ordinance calls on Shimane to establish a plan of action for getting out of nuclear power by an unspecified date, to up the use of natural and renewable energy sources, and to establish a committee to develop a concrete policy for that purpose.

Chugoku Electric Power Co.'s Shimane nuclear plant, in Matsue, has two reactors. About 469,000 people in Shimane and Tottori prefectures live within 30 km of the plant. Last month, Chugoku Electric formally asked the Nuclear Regulation Authority to inspect reactor 2 to determine whether it meets new safety standards established last year.

Reactor 2 was built in 1989, making it one of Japan's newer reactors. Shimane's reactor 1, on the other hand, turns 40 years old this year and its future is uncertain.

Anti-nuke groups try to convince Taiwanese to join campaign

January 7, 2014

Anti-nuclear groups urge Taiwanese to join reactor makers lawsuit

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/07/national/anti-nuclear-groups-urge-taiwanese-to-join-reactor-makers-lawsuit/#.Uswpl7TrV1s>

Kyodo

TAIPEI – Two Japanese anti-nuclear groups urged Taiwanese on Tuesday to join their international campaign seeking to abolish a law in Japan that exempts suppliers of nuclear plant equipment from legal responsibilities for accidents.

Members of No Nukes Asia Actions and No Nukes Asia Forum told a news conference at the nation's legislature that they intend to file the "Reactor Suppliers Lawsuit" against Toshiba Corp., Hitachi Ltd. and General Electric Co., which produced the reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

Akihiro Shima, a legal adviser for the groups, said that while power companies and the government are held legally responsible for any nuclear disaster in Japan, they want reactor manufactures to be held accountable as well.

Apart from abolishing the Act on Compensation for Nuclear Damages, the lawsuit seeks symbolic compensation of ¥100 per individual plaintiff from the three manufacturers for "spiritual damage" from the 2011 nuclear crisis.

It will be filed in the Tokyo District Court.

The groups are hoping to get 2,000 people to join the plaintiff team by the end of February.

They will also visit South Korea, Mongolia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Germany, Canada and the United States with the aim of getting 10,000 people on board by the end of March.

Koizumi: Utilities have been "telling a pack of lies"

January 12, 2014

POINT OF VIEW/ Maki Okubo: 'We've been lied to,' said ex-Prime Minister Koizumi

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/column/AJ201401120009>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

[The city news desk phone rang around noon on Nov. 12. It was picked up by a rookie reporter who joined The Asahi Shimbun last spring.

The caller said, "This is Junichiro Koizumi. Is Okubo-san in?"

Taken aback, the rookie told him haltingly that I was out chasing a story. "Then, please convey her my best regards and thanks for mentioning my statement in her column," the former prime minister said, and hung up.

Two days before this call, I had written in this column about a damages suit brought against the Japanese government by Japanese settlers in the Dominican Republic, who claimed they had been lied to by the government.

Although the government won the lawsuit in 2006, Koizumi, who was prime minister at the time, issued a formal statement in which he apologized for the "immense suffering (of the settlers) due to the government's response at the time." This resulted in the government reversing its stance on the issue and paying compensation to the plaintiffs as well as non-plaintiff migrants.

I commented in my column, "Unless a politician gives directions, bureaucrats would not budge. That is the reality in Japan."

I wonder if my words struck the right chord in Koizumi, who at the time was urging Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to end our country's reliance on nuclear power generation.

Koizumi had turned down an interview request for my column. But after I sent him a letter thanking him for the phone call, Koizumi had a mutual acquaintance contact me and relay his invitation that the three of us get together for dinner.

"This is not an interview," the acquaintance stressed, reminding me that Koizumi has not granted a single request for an interview or TV appearance since he stepped down as prime minister. But there was a

question I just had to ask him, face to face. The question was, "Why have you become such a vocal opponent of nuclear power generation now?"

He was a staunch proponent of nuclear power generation while he was prime minister. His argument was that if our country is to curb carbon dioxide emissions, we cannot do away with nuclear power generation.

Greeting me jovially as he came to our table, Koizumi looked way more youthful than his 71 years. As soon as he was seated, he said, "I have a cousin living in Brazil, who's had as hard a time as those settlers in the Dominican Republic did. We know the government told bold-faced lies to those people (who migrated to the Dominican Republic)."

When Koizumi made a state visit to Brazil in 2004, Japanese immigrants gave him such a warm welcome that he was overwhelmed with deep emotion, and broke down and cried. He recalled how he choked up when he thought of the feelings of those expats.]

I felt convinced that Koizumi's "defection" from the pro-nuke camp to the anti-nuke camp must also have been caused by some deeply emotional experience. So, I asked him, "What was the biggest reason for your change of heart?"

Looking me squarely in the eye, Koizumi launched into a voluble spiel.

"Denjiren (the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan) has been telling a pack of lies," he began. "When experts say nuclear power generation is safe and doesn't cost much and this is the only way to go if we want to stop relying on coal, well, we believe them. But they've been lying to us for years. And the point is, we've never really known anything about nuclear power generation. We had little interest in it before 3/11, and we certainly had no idea how difficult it is to control nuclear energy."

"You felt you were taken for a ride?" I ventured. "That's it. Exactly," he replied.

Wow. So, he switched sides when he realized he had been deceived by bureaucrats and nuclear experts. I was reminded of victims of fraud. I then tried a number of times to get him to say something about victims of the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, but I struck out there.

Anyway, here was a man who held Japan's highest political office for five and a half years, lamenting now--and openly admitting--that he'd been lied to.

When you think about it, Japan is really a dreadful country where critical information is deliberately withheld from the prime minister who determines the fate of the country, and even he is made to believe the "myth" of nuclear safety. I felt I could understand Koizumi's defection as a person.

Koizumi's "zero-nuke" statement gained national attention in late August, when Takao Yamada, a senior writer at The Mainichi Shimbun, mentioned it in his column.

Koizumi recalled, "That reminded me anew of **the power of newspapers**. I mean, I'd been saying the same thing in my twice- or three-times-a-month lecture meetings (before Yamada's column came out), but my comments were completely ignored. The column must've made it impossible to ignore them anymore."

Koizumi was quoted in Yamada's column as saying, "In a battle, the most difficult part is the final phase, namely, the withdrawal ... During the Second Sino-Japanese War, Japan should have pulled out of Manchuria, but couldn't. In our present age, the business community says the Japanese economy can't grow without nuclear power generation, but that's not true. And back during the Sino-Japanese War, Manchuria was said to be Japan's lifeline. But look at Japan now. We've grown and prospered without Manchuria, haven't we?"

I asked writer Kazutoshi Hando, 83, an expert on the Showa Era (1926-1989), for his take on Koizumi's "zero-nuke" remarks.

"I detest Koizumi," Hando said. "When he was prime minister, I felt his political style was the same as Adolf Hitler's before the Nazis seized power. That said, however, Koizumi's zero-nuke remarks fully stand to reason, and I think his observation concerning Manchuria is right on the money."

Hando went on to explain that after winning the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), Japan sought to join the ranks of the great powers in order to protect the interests it had acquired through that war. As a result, the Korean Peninsula became Japan's territory of interest, to protect which the Japanese government made Manchuria its "lifeline," citing natural resources, population problems and other reasons for doing so.

"Seen in the light of modern history, perhaps nuclear power generation and Manchuria share the same meaning," Hando noted. "In the past, holding on to Manchuria led to Japan's doom. In the days ahead, holding on to nuclear power generation may lead to Japan's doom."

The dinner with Koizumi went on for nearly three hours, during which our conversation topics ranged from movies, books, golf and the theater. When it was time to say good-bye, I tried to present him with a bouquet of 30 red roses I'd brought. But he firmly and politely declined, saying it was his strict policy not to accept gifts.

When I told him I was going to write about our dinner meeting, Koizumi laughed, raised a hand in farewell, and left.

Maki Okubo is a senior staff writer of The Asahi Shimbun.

We do not believe nuclear reactors should be restarted

January 14, 2014

Anti-nuclear sit-in protest marks 1,000 days in Kyushu

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201401140051>

By MASAHIRO IWATA/ Staff Writer

FUKUOKA--In April 2011, one month after the onset of the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, demonstrators staged a sit-in outside the head office of Kyushu Electric Power Co.

The anti-nuke protesters were still there the next day, and the day after that.

On Jan. 14, the activists marked the 1,000th day of their sit-down protest.

"Humans cannot live side by side with nuclear energy," said protest organizer Yukinobu Aoyagi. "Never again should lives be threatened and livelihoods deprived."

Aoyagi, 67, embarked on the protests after receiving an e-mail from a survivor of the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Although he was opposed to nuclear weapons, the hibakusha said he regretted that he had been indifferent to nuclear power generation.

A former theology student and social studies teacher, Aoyagi had been involved since the 1970s in activities to help ethnic Korean residents and foreign workers in Japan.

"Human dignity is important to me," the activist said.

Aoyagi enlisted support from plaintiffs in anti-nuclear lawsuits and Kyushu Electric shareholders critical of nuclear power. He and his partners staged around-the-clock sit-ins during the first month.

More than 3,000 people have signed their names in support of the cause.

The protesters now gather outside Kyushu Electric's main office on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. with banners that read, "Let's stop nuclear plants." Each day, they erect two 2.5-meter-square canopies on a sidewalk to shield themselves from the elements.

The canopies, bought with donations from supporters, have been replaced three times.

In summer months, the sidewalk often becomes baking hot. Some protesters suffered dramatic weight loss from sweating. In winter, oil stoves are not enough to ward off the chill factor from the wind.

A young Kyushu Electric worker once dropped by and criticized the protesters, saying that nuclear power is necessary. But after speaking several times with another mid-level Kyushu Electric employee, Aoyagi got the impression that not everyone at the utility feels the same way.

Kyushu Electric declined to comment on the protesters' campaign.

"Many people have reservations about nuclear power," a company official said. "We take their concerns seriously and try to gain an understanding for our operations."

The Nuclear Regulation Authority is expected to complete safety screenings for Kyushu Electric's Genkai and Sendai nuclear plants this year. The Abe administration plans to have idle reactors up and running once they are deemed safe.

Worried about Aoyagi's physical condition, some say it may be time to put an end to the campaign. But the activist said he has no intention of calling it quits.

"Our canopies may be blown away by the wind, but they speak for the citizens," Aoyagi said. "We will continue to declare our intention. We do not believe nuclear reactors should be restarted."

Japanese engineer urges Taiwan not to repeat the same mistake

January 16, 2014

Fukushima No. 1 engineer's warning to Taiwan: Nuclear power unstable

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/16/national/fukushima-no-1-engineers-warning-to-taiwan-nuclear-power-unstable/#.UtkPibTrV1t>

by Ko Shu-Ling
Kyodo

TAIPEI – A Japanese engineer who helped build reactor 4 at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant said such plants are **inherently unstable**, urging Taiwan to ditch atomic energy for renewable resources.

Mitsuhiro Tanaka, arriving in Taipei on Tuesday with a delegation of Diet members for a six-day visit, told a press conference Wednesday that the 1986 Chernobyl disaster changed his views on nuclear power.

“Nuclear accidents are bound to happen someday, only that we don’t know when they will happen,” he said.

Tanaka, who helped build part of reactor 4 while working at Hitachi Ltd. in 1974, quit the company in 1977 and became a writer. He chronicled the discovery of a manufacturing defect in reactor 4, and the subsequent coverup, in a book in 1990.

When he went in 1988 to the then-Ministry of International Trade and Industry to report the cover-up, the government refused to investigate it and Hitachi denied his accusations.

Little did he know that the manufacturing defect would resurface decades later after the March 11, 2011, magnitude-9 earthquake off the Pacific coast rocked the plant, spawning a tsunami that robbed it of all power and disabled its cooling systems, triggering three core meltdowns.

Reactor 4 was shut for maintenance during the crisis but hit by hydrogen explosions and a fire that spread from adjacent units.

At the news conference, House of Representatives member Taro Kono joined Tanaka in his opposition to nuclear power.

Urging Taiwan’s government to make information publicly accessible, Kono voiced disappointment that Taiwan Power Co., operator of the island’s three nuclear plants, had refused to let the politicians visit one of them.

Kono, who in 2009 unsuccessfully ran to become president of the Liberal Democratic Party (and thus prime minister) like his father, Yohei Kono, said his colleagues urged him during the campaign to refrain from opposing nuclear energy.

"I hope Taiwan doesn't repeat the same mistake as we did," he said.

Tanaka and Kono are among the many Japanese who have turned their backs on or ramped up opposition to the nuclear industry since the meltdowns in Fukushima, which forced thousands from their homes. Former leaders Junichiro Koizumi and Morihiro Hosokawa have joined the chorus, challenging Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's pro-nuclear stance as Hosokawa vies to become Tokyo's new governor.

Hokkaido needs to protect itself against nuke plant

January 18, 2014

Hokkaido city to file lawsuit to stop nuclear plant construction

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140118p2g00m0fp038000c.html>

HAKODATE (Kyodo) -- The mayor of a city in Hokkaido said Saturday the municipal government plans to file a lawsuit around March against the state and an electric power utility to stop construction of a nuclear power plant in neighboring Aomori Prefecture.

In the lawsuit to be filed with the Tokyo District Court, the Hakodate municipal government is expected to demand the state nullify its approval to build the plant in Oma by Electric Power Development Co., city government officials said.

It would be the first nuclear power-related lawsuit against the state by a local government.

The city "would suffer devastating damage in the event of an accident, and it is unreasonable that the plant is being constructed without the consent of the city," Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo said.

Although separated by the Tsugaru Strait, Hakodate is located 23 kilometers from the plant at the shortest point.

The city plans to claim in the lawsuit it needs to prepare measures to protect the lives of the citizens in a nuclear emergency because it lies within the so-called 30-km radius urgent protective action planning zone, the officials said.

Electric Power Development, known as J-Power, began building the Oma plant in May 2008. Construction was suspended after the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi complex triggered by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami but was resumed in October 2012.

The city government plans to submit a relevant bill to an ordinary session of the municipal assembly in February as it needs approval from the assembly to file the lawsuit.

January 18, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

One-third of local assemblies want to abolish nuclear power

January 19, 2014

Study: Nearly one-third of localities call for end to nuclear power

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201401190021>

By TORU NAKAGAWA/ Staff Writer

Nearly one-third of the nation's local assemblies, including those at the prefectural level, have submitted statements calling for the abolition of nuclear power plants to the Diet since the Fukushima crisis in 2011, according to a study by The Asahi Shimbun.

Most of such statements by 455 assemblies were adopted in prefectures that share borders with prefectures hosting nuclear power plants. The declarations called for a sweeping change in the nation's energy policy, and a large number also advocate a significant increase in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

The Kochi municipal assembly in Kochi Prefecture demanded a "review of dependence on nuclear power plants whose safety is not established," while the Kunitachi municipal assembly in Tokyo pressed for a "switch to a society not relying on nuclear power."

The Fukaya municipal assembly in Saitama Prefecture went further, calling for an "immediate halt to nuclear power generation."

The results of the study showed that nuclear power generation could emerge as a central issue in local elections like the Feb. 9 Tokyo gubernatorial race, campaigning for which kicks off Jan. 23. Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, serves Tokyo and neighboring prefectures in the Kanto region.

According to the local autonomy law, a local assembly can adopt a statement representing an opinion on issues to get it reflected in national policy.

Such a statement is submitted to the government or the Diet, although it is not legally binding.

According to the secretariat at the Upper House, the Diet has received 1,475 statements on the energy issue since the accident occurred at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in March 2011.

The Asahi Shimbun tallied the submissions, excluding those related to compensation for evacuees and leaks of contaminated water at the plant.

With 54, Hokkaido topped the nation's 47 prefectures in terms of the number of local assemblies adopting an official position.

Prefectures neighboring Fukushima Prefecture also had high numbers, with Yamagata, 25; Tochigi, 22; and Ibaraki, 19.

In Kochi Prefecture, 23 local assemblies, or more than half of the total, passed such statements. The prefecture is located next to Ehime Prefecture, which hosts Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata nuclear power plant in Ikata.

Minamisoma mayor re-elected

January 20, 2014

Famous anti-nuclear mayor in Fukushima Pref. wins re-election

Katsunobu Sakurai

拡大写真

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140120p2a00m0na008000c.html>

MINAMISOMA, Fukushima -- Minamisoma Mayor Katsunobu Sakurai was re-elected Jan. 19, capitalizing on his campaign against nuclear power which drew global sympathy and attention in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Sakurai, 58, collected 17,123 votes to win the mayoral election for a second four-year term, compared with 10,985 votes for former Mayor Issei Watanabe, 70, and 5,367 for former head of the city assembly Motoe Yokoyama, 65.

Sakurai's re-election victory over his two rivals with close ties to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is certain to put pressure on the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to change its policy to restart idled nuclear reactors in Japan. Nuclear power is also expected to become a focal point of the Feb. 9 Tokyo gubernatorial election.

Whether to end nuclear power generation and whether idled nuclear reactors should be reactivated or not are also likely to become hot issues in a growing number of elections, even among municipalities that don't host nuclear power plants.

When initial reports about Sakurai's probable win reached his office in the city's Haramachi district, a beaming Sakurai said the electoral result represented the voters' sound judgment. "I am aspiring to realize a nuclear-free society and build a Minamisoma that we can boast about to the world," he said, drawing big applause and cheers from about 200 supporters.

After the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, Sakurai turned to the Internet to tell his city's plight to the world and was listed on TIME magazine's 100 most influential people that year.

Sakurai also serves as a facilitator for a council of municipal leaders, including former and current governors, mayors and village chiefs, who have been trying to get rid of nuclear power in Japan. He also played a major role in forcing Tohoku Electric Power Co. in 2013 to cancel the Namie-Odaka nuclear power plant project that was to saddle the town of Namie and Minamisoma's Odaka district. During the mayoral election campaign, he also called for expanding the anti-nuclear council of municipal leaders, challenging his two rivals who expressed their support for restarting nuclear reactors in other prefectures.

In Fukushima Prefecture, six incumbent mayors and village chiefs have failed in their re-election bids in the current fiscal year due to protracted reconstruction efforts. Sakurai won re-election partly because his two rivals failed to unite and settle on a single candidacy. During the election campaign, Sakurai tried to dodge criticism over slow restoration work, saying the number of residents in Minamisoma has risen to 52,000 from less than 10,000 at one point due to mass evacuations.

Sakurai's victory has buoyed the spirits of members of the anti-nuclear council of municipal leaders. Former Tokaimura village chief Tatsuya Murakami in Ibaraki Prefecture said Sakurai's re-election victory would make it difficult for the Abe government to restart nuclear reactors without any debate. He also said the victory would strengthen the hands of the anti-nuclear force in the Tokyo gubernatorial election and proposed fielding a unified anti-nuclear candidate.

Kosai Mayor Hajime Mikami in Shizuoka Prefecture said voters have the final say in the nation's energy policy. He said the anti-nuclear movement should also be a focal point in municipalities that do not host nuclear facilities.

Hosokawa's failed strategy

Hosokawa's antinuclear drive flops in Tokyo election

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140210p2g00m0dm036000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa ran for Tokyo governor with the single focus of preventing Japan from restarting its nuclear power plants -- a strategy that failed as voters were more concerned about his age, past money scandal and lack of attention to other important issues.

The 76-year-old Hosokawa came third behind former health minister Yoichi Masuzoe, 65, and lawyer Kenji Utsunomiya, 67, in Sunday's election, after campaigning -- with the help of another former premier, Junichiro Koizumi -- for a permanent end to nuclear power generation in Japan.

During the 17-day campaign, Hosokawa and Koizumi concentrated on talking about the risks associated with nuclear plants, pointing to the Fukushima and Chernobyl disasters.

Hosokawa also stressed that Japan has survived without nuclear power since the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in March 2011, although some of its nuclear reactors across the nation continued to operate for a while after the disaster until shut down for safety checkups.

Now is the time to make a shift, like Germany, from "costly and dangerous" nuclear power generation to environmentally friendly renewable energy, Hosokawa said.

But one question was always in the minds of many voters: how big an impact can the governor of Tokyo have on the national government's energy policy?

Senior officials of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which supported Masuzoe, indicated prior to the election that Hosokawa should stay out of national issues.

Among them, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said energy policy is formulated by the national government, not the Tokyo metropolitan government.

"There was nothing wrong with a single-issue campaign by Mr. Hosokawa, but he wasn't ready to respond to expected criticism of his lack of attention to other issues," said Masaru Kohno, professor of politics at Waseda University.

"There is an impression among voters that both Mr. Hosokawa and Mr. Koizumi have passed the peaks of their careers, so Mr. Hosokawa had to show he was prepared with developed game plans right from the start of campaigning."

Hosokawa's entry into the gubernatorial race was a big surprise because he had been out of politics for more than 15 years and was thought to be happy with his life as a potter in the hot spring resort of Yugawara, Kanagawa Prefecture, southwest of Tokyo.

Hosokawa announced his campaign pledges on Jan. 22, just one day before the official start of campaigning, after postponing his press conference twice to avoid contradicting himself about his previous history of borrowing from parcel delivery firm Sagawa Express Co.

Asked at the Jan. 22 press conference to explain about the money scandal that ended his brief premiership in April 1994, Hosokawa said he paid back 100 million yen to Sagawa Express over 10 years after borrowing it in 1982 and did nothing wrong.

Hosokawa refused to engage in a proposed direct debate with other major candidates apparently out of fear that he would be questioned about the Sagawa money and his plans regarding issues other than nuclear energy, according to critics.

In addition, there were calls from many quarters to field just one antinuclear candidate -- either Hosokawa or lawyer Kenji Utsunomiya -- to avoid splitting the antinuclear vote and give the candidate a better chance against the LDP-backed Masuzoe.

But both Hosokawa and Utsunomiya, the former head of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, decided to run separately.

There was also a view that things could be different if Koizumi, four years younger and much more popular than Hosokawa, threw his hat into the ring.

"I have to say Mr. Hosokawa wasn't an appropriate candidate for this election, especially after the previous governor (Naoki Inose) resigned over a money scandal," said Masahiro Iwasaki, professor of political science at Nihon University.

"Mr. Hosokawa also has a record of quitting all of a sudden, once as premier over the Sagawa money and again as a Diet member in May 1998," Iwasaki said. "This election was to choose a leader to also make preparations for the Tokyo Olympics. Mr. Hosokawa would be 82 years old in 2020 after needing to be re-elected (in 2018)."

A Tokyo governor serves a four-year term and can be re-elected.

In 1998, Hosokawa abruptly submitted his resignation from the House of Representatives, saying he had turned 60, the standard retirement age of central and local government officials and at many companies, and had fulfilled his responsibilities with the launch of a new political party.

"What to do about nuclear energy is probably not a pressing issue to people in Tokyo because there is no nuclear plant in the capital," Iwasaki said. "They certainly have other things to worry about that affect their everyday lives, such as the economy and social welfare."

Disappointment and lament for lost opportunity

February 10, 2013

Fukushima nuclear evacuees disappointed by Tokyo gubernatorial election outcome

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140210p2a00m0na014000c.html>

FUKUSHIMA -- Fukushima nuclear disaster evacuees were critical of Tokyo voters and expressed despair after learning of former Health, Labor and Welfare Minister Yoichi Masuzoe's victory in the Feb. 9 Tokyo gubernatorial election.

Eisaku Ishii, a 68-year-old gas retailer from Hirono -- many of whose residents have not returned home due to the reactor meltdowns -- said, "I was disappointed. The people in Tokyo do not understand the disaster victims' feelings. The Tokyo Olympics will come before us, and we'll be forgotten.

"Mr. Masuzoe should clearly state his opinion about nuclear power. If he wants to have electricity, he should build a nuclear power plant in Tokyo Bay," he added.

Toshiko Amano, a 62-year-old evacuee from Namie, near the crippled nuclear power plant, lives in temporary housing in Nihonmatsu, Fukushima Prefecture. She said, "I had this uncomfortable feeling about the push for zero nuclear power becoming a focal point of the Tokyo election. I don't feel receptive to nuclear promotion, but this election was for Tokyoites. It doesn't matter whoever becomes the Tokyo governor."

Anti-nuclear side laments lost 'golden opportunity' in Tokyo election

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201402100060

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Anti-nuclear activists suffered yet another setback, but this one was particularly painful.

In the Feb. 9 Tokyo gubernatorial election, ballots cast for the two major anti-nuclear candidates together fell short of the tally for the winner, Yoichi Masuzoe, who was backed by the pro-nuclear Liberal Democratic Party.

“It was a golden opportunity sent from heaven,” said a despondent Hiroyuki Kawai, a lawyer who heads a civil advocacy group calling for a nuclear phaseout.

Kawai and his colleagues tried to unify the candidacies of former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa and lawyer Kenji Utsunomiya, who both called for an end to Japan’s reliance on nuclear power generation. The anti-nuclear side thought they caught a break when another former prime minister, the popular Junichiro Koizumi, recently began vocally opposing nuclear power and threw his support behind Hosokawa’s campaign.

But neither Utsunomiya, backed by the Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party, nor Hosokawa withdrew from the race--and both ended up as losers.

Hosokawa and Utsunomiya won 1.94 million votes combined, short of the 2.11 million ballots obtained by Masuzoe, who was also supported by ruling coalition partner New Komeito.

“There would have been more discussions on a nuclear phaseout if the candidacies had been unified,” Kawai said. “But it is true, regretfully, that the nuclear issue did not catch on with Tokyo’s residents.”

Anti-nuclear forces have seldom seen electoral success, even after the 2011 meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Yukiko Kada, governor of Shiga Prefecture, formed the Tomorrow Party of Japan ahead of the 2012 Lower House election on a “graduation from nuclear power” platform. But the party’s efforts to co-opt a broad political spectrum blurred its policy lines, and the party was crushed in the election.

In the 2013 Upper House election, the LDP was the only major political party that called for restarting idled nuclear reactors. Although more than half of eligible voters said in public opinion polls that they

were opposed to the reactor restarts, the LDP easily won the election and cemented its control over the Diet.

Anti-nuclear groups have also had little success on another level.

Since the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, they have campaigned to hold referendums on reactor restarts in the city of Osaka, in Tokyo, and in Niigata and Shizuoka prefectures. But their efforts failed when the local assemblies rejected proposed ordinances that would have enabled such referendums.

“The issue of nuclear power generation carries as much weight as the issue of constitutional revisions,” said Hajime Imai, a 59-year-old journalist well-versed in referendums. “The issue should therefore be put to the procedures of direct democracy.”

Nuclear policy is expected to be a campaign issue in elections in areas that already have or could host nuclear power plants.

Two candidates in the Feb. 23 gubernatorial election in Yamaguchi Prefecture openly oppose plans to build a new nuclear power plant in Kaminoseki. Their opponent is trying to sidestep the issue by arguing that energy policy is up to the central government.

That poll will be followed by a governor’s election on March 16 in Ishikawa Prefecture, which hosts the Shika nuclear plant. The incumbent is set to approve restarting nuclear reactors as long as their safety has been confirmed. Two of his rivals are calling for a departure from nuclear energy.

Shiga Governor Kada and Yuhei Sato, governor of Fukushima Prefecture, are expected to end their terms in July and November, respectively.

Despite Masuzoe’s victory, some nuclear opponents are finding positive signs from the Tokyo election.

Anti-nuclear speeches by Hosokawa and Koizumi drew huge crowds during the campaign, and demonstrators staged a weekly anti-nuclear protest rally outside the prime minister’s office in central Tokyo on Feb. 7, two days before ballots were cast in the capital.

“The governor’s race was significant in the sense that it provided citizens with an opportunity to reflect on a nuclear phaseout, which emerged as a major issue of contention,” said Yumi Nakamura, a 51-year-old

member of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, the protest organizer. "We are not going to back down."

Ruling bloc relieved after Tokyo election, antinuclear parties not

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140210p2g00m0dm037000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- The ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner, the New Komeito party, on Sunday hailed the victory of former health minister Yoichi Masuzoe as Tokyo's new governor, taking aim at antinuclear power candidates endorsed by opposition parties for trying to make energy the race's sole focus.

Opposition parties rejected such claims, and renewed their call for a break with nuclear power generation, as Japan still struggles to deal with the aftermath of the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power complex.

"It's clear that the old political tactic of focusing only on a single issue and trying to win support did not resonate" with the public, said LDP Vice President Masahiko Komura.

The remarks were apparently directed at antinuclear power candidates such as former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, 76, who allied with Junichiro Koizumi, a popular former Japanese leader.

Masuzoe, 65, has said Japan needs to reduce its dependence on nuclear power in the long run. But Hosokawa, and 67-year-old Kenji Utsunomiya, the former head of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, called for an immediate end to nuclear power generation and opposed the restart of nuclear plants across Japan.

Senior lawmakers from both the LDP and New Komeito said Masuzoe's policy package was received well by Tokyo voters, who placed importance on the economy, welfare, and employment as the capital will host the Olympics in 2020.

"The victory of Masuzoe will help bring huge accomplishments to the Abe administration because he is on the same page" on various issues including energy, said Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga.

The government is expected to adopt an energy policy that could support nuclear power, as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said it is "irresponsible" to promise Japan will bring the number of nuclear power plants to zero.

But opposition party lawmakers said Tokyo voters did not reject their calls for doing away with nuclear power generation, and the absence of a sufficient policy debate was to blame.

They added their failed attempt to narrow down the number of antinuclear power candidates to one led to the defeat of both Hosokawa and Utsunomiya.

The opposition parties -- the main Democratic Party of Japan, the Social Democratic Party and the People's Life Party -- are set to urge the government not to restart idled nuclear power plants across Japan, as Masuzoe's victory does not mean voters approved Japan's return to nuclear power.

"It's just that Hosokawa wasn't able to get his antinuclear power message across to voters," a senior DPJ lawmaker told Kyodo News, saying that Hosokawa did not stand out as Masuzoe also called for the phasing-out of nuclear power.

In Sunday's polls, Masuzoe came first overwhelmingly, followed by Utsunomiya, endorsed by the Japanese Communist Party and the SDP. Hosokawa, effectively supported by the DPJ and other small opposition parties, came third.

February 10, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

" Will continue efforts to make a nuclear-free Japan"

February 10, 2014

Hosokawa, Koizumi to continue campaigning against nuclear energy

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/02/10/national/hosokawa-koizumi-to-continue-campaigning-against-nuclear-energy/#.UvkN-YXrV1t>

Kyodo

Morihiro Hosokawa and fellow former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi plan to keep calling for a permanent end to the use of nuclear energy in Japan after Hosokawa's failed attempt to become Tokyo governor Sunday.

"I will continue my anti-nuclear activities with those who gave me warm support in this election," Hosokawa said after media projections showed former health minister Yoichi Masuzoe heading for a landslide victory.

"I would like to express my deep gratitude to former leader Koizumi, who took to the streets throughout my campaign," Hosokawa said.

Given continuing opposition to the Liberal Democratic Party-led government's move to allow nuclear reactors to resume operations if they clear new safety standards introduced last summer, the gubernatorial election in part took on the appearance of a referendum on the future of Japan's energy policy when Hosokawa entered the race with the help of the hugely popular Koizumi.

"I will continue to make efforts to create a nuclear-free Japan," Koizumi said in a statement released Sunday.

During the 17-day campaign period, Koizumi even criticized Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who held an important post in the Koizumi administration in the early 2000s, saying he is angry about the government's plan to use nuclear reactors "as if nothing has happened (in Fukushima)."

Senior ruling party officials claim Koizumi will lose his influence for supporting Hosokawa against the current government.

"Mr. Koizumi would have remained a big gun if he hadn't supported Mr. Hosokawa. What a pity," said one Cabinet minister close to Abe.

Another senior LDP official said of the two ex-prime ministers, "Both of them tarnished themselves in the final stages of their careers. They are men of the past."

Hakodate gov't wants to stop nuclear plant construction in Aomori

February 12, 2014

Hokkaido city filing suit to stop construction of nuclear plant in Aomori

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201402120063>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

HAKODATE, Hokkaido--The Hakodate municipal government will file a lawsuit demanding a halt to construction of a nuclear power plant across the Tsugaru Strait, arguing that an accident there could have catastrophic consequences for the city.

The lawsuit against the central government and the electric power company building the nuclear plant in Oma, Aomori Prefecture, on the northern tip of Japan's main island of Honshu, will be filed with the Tokyo District Court as early as March.

It will be the first lawsuit by a local government seeking the suspension of nuclear power plant construction.

Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo announced the legal measure on Feb. 12.

Kudo was elected a month after the Fukushima nuclear accident started in March 2011 on promises to demand a permanent freeze on the construction of the Oma nuclear plant.

Tokyo-based Electric Power Development Co. (J-Power) is expected to submit an application for safety clearance for its single-reactor Oma nuclear power plant with the Nuclear Regulation Authority this spring.

It is J-Power's first nuclear power plant, and will have a generating capacity of 1.38 gigawatts, according to the company.

The Oma plant is also expected to become the world's first nuclear facility that uses only mixed-oxide fuel, a mixture of uranium and plutonium retrieved from spent fuel.

An official with the publicity section at J-Power's local unit declined to comment on the expected lawsuit.

"We cannot comment at a stage when the filing of the lawsuit has yet to be finalized," the official said. "We have been providing Hakodate with information (about the plant) and will continue to do so."

Part of the area under Hakodate's administrative jurisdiction falls within the central government-designated Urgent Protective Action Planning Zone (UPZ), a 30-kilometer radius of a nuclear power plant.

The shortest distance between Hakodate and the Oma plant is about 23 km.

Local governments are required to come up with evacuation plans within the UPZ for a possible nuclear disaster.

In the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, all residents in Namie, a town within 30 km of the crippled plant, were forced to flee.

In the lawsuit, Hakodate city plans to argue that a local government has the right to prevent its possible destruction, just as individuals have personal rights for guarantees of their lives and safety.

Hakodate will also maintain that the government's approval for the construction of the Oma plant is illegal because it was based on reactor safety standards set before the Fukushima crisis unfolded.

Construction of the Oma plant started in May 2008, was suspended after the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami caused the Fukushima disaster, and resumed in October 2012.

Hakodate is also expected to argue that as part of official procedures for constructing nuclear plants, the owners should be required to obtain the consent of local governments within a 30-km radius of the nuclear plants.

Under the current setup, plant owners are obliged to gain approval only from the prefectural and municipal governments that host the plants

The Hakodate government plans to seek approval of the planned lawsuit in a city assembly session that opens later this month.

City officials said many assembly members have already expressed support for the legal action.

Hiroyuki Kawai, a lawyer involved in a string of lawsuits concerning nuclear power plants around the nation, will coordinate a 10-member legal team that will represent Hakodate.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga declined to comment on the matter last month, when the word of the potential lawsuit spread.

"We want to refrain from commenting before the suit is brought before the court," he said at a news conference on Jan. 22. "With regard to the operation of the plant, the most important thing is that its safety is confirmed by the Nuclear Regulation Authority since Japan now has set the world's most stringent safety standards."

Tsuneyoshi Asami, a former Oma mayor who had led efforts to bring a nuclear power plant to the town since the 1970s, said Oma turned to the project to reinvigorate the local economy.

"I understand how citizens in Hakodate are feeling," said Asami, 76. "(The nuclear power plant project) is meant to revive the town of Oma. The state and the plant operator should make efforts to gain the understanding of Hakodate residents."

The coastal town is famous for its high-grade tuna, which often fetch eye-popping prices at auction. However, hauls of tuna, kelp, sea urchin, abalone and other marine products have been shrinking.

"Oma was permeated with a sense of crisis that the town may cease to exist," Asami said, recalling the days when the town was desperate to attract a nuclear power plant.

Current Oma Mayor Mitsuharu Kanazawa said Jan. 21 that he was aware of Hakodate's plan to seek legal action to suspend plant construction but added that his position to promote nuclear power will not change.

Apart from the Oma plant, two nuclear reactors--in Aomori Prefecture and Shimane Prefecture--are currently being built in Japan.

The Abe administration is pushing to bring the nation's 48 idled reactors back online as soon as their safety is cleared.

Hakodate to file for injunction on nuclear plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140212_35.html

A city in northern Japan will seek a court order to halt the construction of a nuclear power plant nearby.

The mayor of Hakodate in Hokkaido told reporters on Wednesday that his city will file a suit with the Tokyo District Court next month after obtaining the city assembly's approval.

Toshiki Kudo said the city will demand that the central government and the plant's operator, J-Power, halt construction work.

The mayor said if an accident were to occur at the planned Ohma plant, it would wreak havoc on the city. The plant is being built across a narrow strait in neighboring Aomori Prefecture, 23 kilometers from Hakodate.

Regulations require local governments within a 30-kilometer radius of a nuclear plant to have plans in place to evacuate residents in the event of a major accident.

Construction work at Ohma was suspended after the 2011 accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, but resumed in October 2012.

J-Power is preparing applications for safety checks required under the government's new safety guidelines.

Kudo said the city has asked the central government and J-Power on 4 occasions to halt construction work indefinitely, but the requests have all been rejected.

Hakodate will be the first local government to become a plaintiff seeking an injunction against a nuclear plant.

The government's Nuclear Regulation Authority and J-Power both declined comment, saying they have yet to receive court papers.

Feb. 12, 2014 - Updated 12:24 UTC

Interview with Naoto Kan

February 15, 2014

INTERVIEW: Kan blasts plan to restart Hamaoka nuclear plant

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201402150051

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Former Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who effectively shut down the Hamaoka nuclear plant following the 2011 Fukushima disaster, criticized as “radically wrong” preparations to bring the facility back online.

In a Feb. 14 interview with The Asahi Shimbun, Kan said the precarious situation surrounding the nuclear plant in quake-prone Shizuoka Prefecture remains unchanged.

Chubu Electric Power Co. earlier in the day submitted an application with the Nuclear Regulation Authority for safety screenings of the No. 4 reactor at the Hamaoka plant, part of the process to restart operations there.

Located in Omaezaki, the Hamaoka plant lies directly above a source area for a predicted giant earthquake along the Nankai Trough, a 4-kilometer depression on the seabed that stretches 700 km from Suruga Bay off Shizuoka Prefecture to areas off eastern Kyushu.

Major temblors have taken place along the Nankai Trough throughout history.

Two months after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami caused the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in March 2011, Chubu Electric shut down the No. 4 and No. 5 reactors at the Hamaoka plant, based on a political decision by Kan, then prime minister from the Democratic Party of Japan.

The Abe administration currently plans to have the Hamaoka plant reactivated if the NRA confirms its safety.

But Kan said emergency evacuation plans have yet to be worked out, and that Japan “cannot afford to take a risk that could compromise the very existence of the nation.” Excerpts from the interview follow:

Question: Steps for bringing the Hamaoka nuclear plant back online are under way. How do you see the move?

Kan: (When the Fukushima nuclear disaster started,) it was estimated that a magnitude-8 earthquake could strike the area (around the Hamaoka plant) with an 87 percent probability within 30 years.

An accident at the Hamaoka plant would require evacuating millions of people, and it would also deal a big blow to Japan’s major arteries, such as the Tokaido Shinkansen Line and the Tomei Expressway, as well as Japan’s auto industry (clustered in the Tokai region).

I requested a shutdown because we were not ready for such a scenario. There has been no change whatsoever in that background situation. It is radically wrong to request safety screenings to prepare for a prospective restart.

Q: You used “extralegal” authority as prime minister to request the shutdown. What made you do so?

A: A nuclear accident, which people said would never happen, actually did happen. Was I supposed to say I would take care of the matter after getting all relevant laws ready at a time when a major earthquake could hit at any time, let’s say tomorrow? I made the political decision out of consideration for the safety

and sense of security of the general public. As prime minister, I had no choice but to do so, and I was obligated to do so.

Q: Chubu Electric has built new coastal levees and has taken other safety measures. What do you think about those steps?

A: There are, roughly speaking, two types of safety measures for a nuclear plant. One pertains to technical measures to prevent an accident from being triggered by earthquakes and tsunamis. The other is about how to evacuate residents and how to mitigate damage once an accident has happened. The NRA only makes decisions on the technical measures. It remains ambiguous who will be responsible for evacuations.

Neither the government nor Chubu Electric has said no accident would ever happen. We cannot afford to take a risk that could compromise the very existence of the nation, even if that could occur only once in a century. Damage would be particularly extensive if an accident were to take place at the Hamaoka plant.

Q: Candidates who called for an immediate departure from nuclear power generation, including former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, lost in the Tokyo gubernatorial election on Feb. 9. What is your take on that?

A: It is not that people have forgotten the fright they experienced at the time (of the Fukushima nuclear disaster), but they are being kept in the dark. **It was by sheer chance that water remained (covering fuel assemblies) in the spent fuel storage pool at the Fukushima No. 1 plant's No. 4 reactor building.**

A compelling sense of fright about Tokyo being rendered uninhabitable is, unfortunately, not shared among the general public. Hosokawa and former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (who backed Hosokawa in the governor's race) both probably had an acute fear of a catastrophic disaster precisely because they have served as prime minister and asked themselves what they could have done. (This article is based on an interview by Takashi Ebuchi and Daisuke Fukuma.)

Please stop exporting nukes

February 22, 2014

Activists point to Fukushima crisis, urge Japan to stop nuclear exports

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/02/22/national/activists-point-to-fukushima-crisis-urge-japan-to-stop-nuclear-exports/#.Uwnz04XrV1v>

Kyodo

Foreign activists urged Tokyo on Friday to give up its policy of exporting nuclear technology as the impact of the meltdown crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant continues to ripple through Japan and other countries even after three years.

“My humble request to the Japanese and the Japanese government is please don’t dump this destructive technology on people who love you,” Sundarrajan Gomathinayagam, a member of the Indian environmental group Poovulagin Nanbargal, said at a news conference in Tokyo.

He made his appeal at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan, where he was joined by fellow antinuclear campaigners from other countries, including France and South Korea, who met five evacuees from the crisis-hit areas this week to learn about their current situation.

Their trip to Japan was arranged by the international environmental group Greenpeace so they can inform people in their own countries in more detail about the Fukushima disaster.

Since the disaster started in March 2011, the Indian activist has been protesting over the Kudankulam nuclear plant in southern India due to concerns over its effect on the environment and public safety.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been promoting the export of Japan’s nuclear technology as part of the country’s economic growth strategy, while domestic opposition to the restart of reactors remains strong.

Japan is speeding up talks to conclude a nuclear pact with India that would pave the way for exporting its nuclear technology to the country.

Jean-Francois Julliard, executive director of Greenpeace France who also attended the press conference, said he felt that the “disaster is still going on” after meeting local residents, including former farmers in Date, Tamura, Futaba and Iitate, all in Fukushima Prefecture.

Among the local residents they met was Minako Sugano, a mother of three who evacuated from one contaminated area to another in Date and is struggling to protect her children’s health.

Julliard, whose country, France, is a global leader in nuclear power technology and has measures in place to respond to accidents, urged Japan not to export atomic power or build new reactors and instead aim to be a “nuclear-free country.”

Neither France nor any other single country can be fully “prepared” for a nuclear accident, he said. Japan is still trying to contain the Fukushima nuclear crisis three years after the disaster displaced many residents.

But the recent spill of highly radioactive water from one of the many storage tanks at the plant continue to raise concerns in Japan and neighboring countries. Tokyo Electric Power Co. revealed Thursday that about 100 tons of contaminated water spilled.

Genpatsu Whiteout by Retsu Wakasugi

February 8, 2014

Anti-nuclear novel by bureaucrat exposes chummy relationship between politicians, industry

By ATSUSHI KOMORI/ Staff Writer

The novel “Genpatsu Whiteout” (Nuclear power plant whiteout) created a buzz in 2013, not only because of its message that the nuclear industry is in bed with politicians, but also because the mysterious author appeared to be a government bureaucrat in the know.

The fictional story, written by Retsu Wakasugi, a pseudonym, was published by Kodansha Ltd. in September last year and revolves around the rush to restart Japan’s nuclear reactors and the vulnerability of the nation’s nuclear facilities to a terrorist attack.

Wakasugi declined an interview request this time due to fears of the author that his identity would be compromised.

But the weekly magazine Aera, published by Asahi Shimbun Publications Inc., scored a meeting with the author at year's end following assurances that his identity would remain concealed and that personal information on his ID card would be blacked out in any photos.

Even though it's just a novel, the book created a stir in government circles because the author described how politicians and the government operate in such a way that only an insider would know.

In the book, Wakasugi details a “monster system,” whereby the electric power industry controls politicians with the revenues it generates from its customers.

One such example of the symbiotic relationship of the so-called “nuclear village” (the utility, politicians, government bureaucrats, academics and others who have vested interests in promoting nuclear power generation), is described in the book as revolving around the prototype Monju fast-breeder reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture.

The controversial reactor, which has been virtually mothballed for over a decade due to safety issues, uses materials from reprocessed spent nuclear fuel and is a pillar of the nation's nuclear waste recycling program. Among some government officials, the plant is also referred to as a “doodlebug,” meaning the project is a money pit.

In the book, Wakasugi quoted a bureaucrat of the secretariat of the Nuclear Regulation Authority as saying, “If we continue to operate conventional nuclear power plants, the byproduct will be nuclear waste that will emit radiation for 100,000 years. That is why Monju is so important. And to continue to maintain the nuclear village's bread-and-butter lifeline, we have to continue promoting the need for the Monju reactor. Unless we do so, the nuclear power myth will collapse.”

A budget examiner for the Finance Ministry said in November 2011 when the government was sorting out its policies, “Every year, 20 billion yen (about \$200 million) is necessary just to maintain it (Monju) without doing any studies. Since 1980, more than 1 trillion yen has been spent (on Monju). But no achievements have been made. Can we justify its cost-benefit performance to the public?”

A handout distributed during the policy discussions described the flow of money to heavy electric machinery makers and other companies.

For example, about 1.5 billion yen is paid to one company every year to inspect fuel equipment and other machinery. About 700 million yen is paid to another company to inspect the cooling system and other equipment. ... The payments total about 20 billion yen every year.

The Japan Atomic Energy Agency, which operates Monju, has many associated companies where officials from the agency land jobs after they retire. In sorting out the government's policies, drastic proposals were raised, including whether to continue research and development at the Monju facility.

In the novel "Genpatsu Whiteout," a bureaucrat with the secretariat of the Nuclear Regulation Authority says, "I think that people in the nuclear village will start up operations again at the Monju facility by instituting a name change, (from Monju) to something like a fast reactor."

In an interview with the monthly magazine Sekai's extra edition, which went on sale in December 2013, Wakasugi was asked whether the government's energy policies changed after the Democratic Party of Japan assumed power in 2009.

"Many politicians depend on this money-collecting system (of the electric power industry)," he replied. "Because of that, electric power companies maintain a veto over the government's policies."

Remember 1954

March 1, 2014

Daigo Fukuryu Maru sailor urges reflection on nuclear arms 60 years after Bikini test

Matashichi Oishi, 80, right, is seen speaking about nuclear abolition during a remembrance ceremony held in Majuro, Marshall Islands, on March 1, 2014. (Mainichi)

拡大写真

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140301p2a00m0na014000c.html>

MAJURO, Marshall Islands -- On March 1, 60 years after the 1954 Castle Bravo hydrogen bomb test rained radioactive fallout upon residents of Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands -- as well as the nearby Daigo Fukuryu Maru tuna fishing boat -- a remembrance ceremony and moment of silence were held in front of parliament buildings in the capital of Majuro.

Joining local residents in attending the ceremony and calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons was 80-year-old Matashichi Oishi from Tokyo's Ota Ward, who was a crew member of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru -- along with a group of university students from Fukushima Prefecture.

The United States conducted a total of 67 nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958 in the Marshall Islands, which were under its administration. The power of the Castle Bravo hydrogen bomb was 1,000 times greater than the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima in 1945.

Matashichi Oishi, 80, right, is seen together with local children on March 1, 2014 in Majuro, Marshall Islands, before participating in a remembrance ceremony for the Castle Bravo nuclear test held 60 years ago. (Mainichi)

拡大写真

Caught up in the "death ash" were the residents of Rongelap Atoll, which lies downwind from where the test was conducted, and where more than 80 residents were irradiated. While all residents were evacuated to an unpopulated island, numerous people died from thyroid cancer and other complications. While the U.S. funded decontamination and residents' return home, many in fact have opted not to go back due to concerns including radiation fears.

"Numerous people from the Marshall Islands lost their lives because nuclear weapons were being created for the purposes of waging wars," Oishi commented in a speech during the ceremony. "I would like to urge our leaders to reflect deeply upon this matter."

Although Oishi has been in poor health since suffering a stroke in 2012, he decided to visit the Marshall Islands again as this could be his "last chance."

"I would like to make known the bitter disappointment of my fellow (Daigo Fukuryu Maru) crew members," he told the Mainichi.

"It appears to me that memory is fading regarding the terror of nuclear (weapons)," he said. He also discussed the nuclear disaster at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, saying, "I am adamantly opposed to both nuclear weapons and nuclear power."

Oishi was silent about his experience for 30 years after the incident occurred. He became angered toward the U.S. and Japanese governments, however, when he saw that they were attempting to keep things under cover and resolve the incident financially. He decided to begin speaking out, however, as he learned more about nuclear horrors.

"The Bikini incident has been influenced by behind-the-scenes political factors," he said. "I believe that there are other things that we are not being told."

Marshall Islands President Christopher Loeak, who visited Japan in February this year and spoke with hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) from Hiroshima, commented during the ceremony, "We must never forget any of the nuclear testing conducted by the United States."

Also in attendance was Yasuyoshi Komizo, chairperson of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, who was invited on behalf of the Hiroshima mayor. "We must share our experiences toward the goal of nuclear abolition," he stated.

Anti-nuclear momentum has been building in the region on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Bikini testing, with hibakusha speaking out about their experiences, and local residents expressing their connection to the islands through dance and song. Such events provided the youth from Japan with an opportunity to overlap the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the effects of the Fukushima nuclear disaster with the history of the Marshall Islands.

March 01, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

For a world without nuclear arms

Editorial: 60 years after Bikini, renewing our resolve to end nuclear arms

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20140301p2a00m0na001000c.htm>

The Marshall Islands marked the 60th anniversary of a United States hydrogen bomb test on the Bikini Atoll on March 1, which exposed 23 crew members aboard the nearby Japanese tuna fishing boat Daigo Fukuryu Maru (Lucky Dragon No. 5) to radiation.

The incident came less than a decade after the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, giving a momentum to the anti-A- and H-bomb movement in Japan. While keeping the memory of the calamity etched in our mind, let us renew our resolve to advance our efforts toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

On March 1, 1954, the Daigo Fukuryu Maru crew was exposed to "death ash" -- or large volumes of nuclear fallout from the H-bomb test. Aikichi Kuboyama, who was serving as chief radio operator aboard the vessel, died six months later. The U.S. government paid \$2 million in condolence money to Japan but has not fully compensated the victims or investigated their conditions.

The incident was part of the 67 nuclear tests that the U.S. carried out in the area between 1946 and 1958, with a total of 1,000 Japanese fishing boats said to have been affected. The realities of the damage inflicted, however, have never been disclosed.

In the 1954 nuclear test, residents of Rongelap Atoll -- which is situated in the lee of Bikini Atoll -- were also exposed to radiation. After a forced evacuation, residents were allowed to return to the atoll, but a spate of health problems forced them to evacuate once again. On March 1 this year, a memorial service for victims of the nuclear test was held in Majuro -- the capital of the Marshall Islands -- attended by former Daigo Fukuryu Maru crew members and other concerned parties.

Residents of Fukushima Prefecture, which suffered the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant disaster, also attended the ceremony.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, there are more than 17,000 nuclear warheads across the globe, though that number has been on a downward trend. U.S. President Barack Obama pledged in a speech five years ago to seek a world free of nuclear weapons, but there is still a long way to go before humanity reaches that goal.

Currently, the only international convention pertaining to nuclear weapons is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which limits nuclear weapons to the U.S., Britain, France, Russia and China. India, Pakistan, and Israel, which have opposed to the nuclear monopoly by the five countries, have yet to join the treaty, while North Korea declared it would pull out of the pact in 2003.

Meanwhile, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which encompasses underground nuclear testing, was adopted at a United Nations General Assembly meeting in 1996 but has not come into effect as the U.S., China and other countries have refused to ratify it. Moreover, India, Pakistan and North Korea have defiantly continued to conduct nuclear tests even after the adoption of the CTBT and have refused to sign it.

Notwithstanding, persistent efforts toward nuclear abolition have been made among non-nuclear powers. In February, an international conference on the humanitarian effect of nuclear weapons was held in Mexico, with Japan and 145 other countries taking part. In April, Hiroshima will host the eighth foreign ministers' meeting on the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), which aims at nuclear disarmament in stages.

Japan faces the dilemma of being dependent on the U.S. nuclear umbrella, but it should proactively collaborate with the international community in their efforts toward nuclear abolition and call upon nuclear powers to take steps, small though they may be, toward a world without nuclear arms.

March 01, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

No one has been indicted

March 2, 2014

Hundreds rally in Tokyo against dropped Fukushima crisis charges

AFP-JIJI

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/03/02/national/hundreds-rally-in-tokyo-against-dropped-fukushima-crisis-charges/#.UxIWloXrV1s>

Hundreds rallied Saturday in Tokyo to protest a decision by prosecutors to drop charges over the Fukushima nuclear meltdowns, meaning no one has been indicted, let alone punished, nearly three years after a calamity ruled “man-made.”

Official records do not list anyone as having died as a direct result of radioactive fallout after tsunami unleashed by the 9.0-magnitude quake of March 11, 2011, crashed into the Fukushima No. 1 plant, swamping cooling systems and causing three reactor meltdowns.

Excluded from those records are Fukushima residents who committed suicide owing to fears about the fallout showered on their hometowns, while others died during the evacuation process. Official data released last week showed that 1,656 people have died in the prefecture from stress and other illnesses related to the nuclear crisis.

“There are many victims of the accident, but no one” has been charged, chief rally organiser Ruiko Muto, 61, told the protesters, displaying a photo of the village of Kawauchi, which fell inside the no-go zone designated by the government around the stricken power plant.

“We are determined to keep telling our experiences as victims to pursue the truth of the disaster, and we want to avoid a repeat in the future,” she said.

The giant tsunami that smashed into the northeast coast swept approximately 18,500 people to their deaths and wiped entire communities off the map. Three years later, tens of thousands of people are still unable to return to their homes around Fukushima No. 1, with scientists warning some areas may have to be abandoned altogether.

“I used to grow organic rice. . . . But I can’t do so any more because of consumers’ worries over radioactive contamination,” Kazuo Nakamura, 45, a farmer from the city of Koriyama in Fukushima, told the rally.

"I want officials of (No. 1 plant operator) Tokyo Electric Power Co. and officials and bureaucrats of the central government to eat Fukushima-grown rice," he shouted to applause.

A parliamentary report has said Fukushima was a "man-made" disaster caused by Japan's culture of "reflexive obedience," and not only attributable to the tsunami of March 2011.

Some 15,000 people whose homes or farms were doused with radioactive materials from the crippled No. 1 plant filed a criminal complaint in 2012 against central government and Tepco officials. However, prosecutors last September decided not to charge any of them with negligence.

Campaigners immediately appealed the decision to the Committee for the Inquest of Prosecution, which has the power to order the defendants be tried. The committee members comprise 11 citizens who are chosen at random by lot.

But since the appeal had to be filed in Tokyo instead of Fukushima, campaigners said the move was "aimed at preventing us from filing a complaint against their decision in Fukushima, where many residents share our anger and grief."

"We want to share with many people in Tokyo our anger and sadness over the fact that no one has taken responsibility three years after the accident," one of the organizers, Miwa Chiwaki, 43, said.

Junko Honda, 48, evacuated to Hokkaido with her family amid the crisis, said her son had to drop out of the education system after high school because the family's income was slashed.

"We can never forgive Tepco and the government," she said.

Campaigners allege that state officials and Tepco executives failed to take measures to bolster the plant against a natural disaster of the magnitude of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. They also hold them responsible for delays in announcing how the radiation was projected to spread from the No. 1 plant.

But prosecutors decided to exempt all of them, saying Tepco and government officials could not have anticipated such a powerful quake and tsunami, and that they had found nothing wrong with the post-disaster response given the environment of crisis.

Yet Hiroyuki Kawai, a lawyer representing the campaigners, said “there were lots of measures that officials could have taken to prevent the disaster.”

“We won’t give up (pushing for) indictment of the officials,” he said.

Campaigners last year filed a separate complaint to prosecutors over Tepco’s handling of the buildup of massive amounts of contaminated water used to cool the No. 1 plant’s wrecked reactors, accusing the utility of committing pollution-related crimes.

Separately, senior Tepco and government officials face several civil lawsuits that were filed by thousands of plaintiffs seeking compensation for mental and financial damage. The plaintiffs are demanding the full restoration of their hometowns to the pre-disaster state.

Radioactive tuna 60 years ago

March 3, 2014

EDITORIAL: 60 years after the H-bomb test on Bikini Atoll, inhuman nature continues



Researchers inspect “radioactive tuna” in Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, in March 1954. The fish was caught by Daigo Fukuryu Maru, which was exposed to radiation from a hydrogen bomb test conducted by the United States in the Bikini Atoll earlier in that month. (Asahi Shimbun file photo)

Sixty years have passed since the United States carried out a hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific on March 1, 1954.

Memories of the exposure of the crew of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, a Japanese tuna fishing boat, to radiation from the blast have faded over time. But the legacy of the incident is, by no means, a thing of the past. The 60th anniversary of the tragedy of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru should serve as a fresh reminder of the horrible damage that nuclear energy could cause, regardless of whether it is used for military or civilian purposes.

The hydrogen bomb, 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, produced a tremendous amount of deadly radioactive fallout. The test and its serious consequences made people around the world painfully aware of the frightening possibility of the nuclear arms race, led by the United States and the Soviet Union, escalating into an apocalyptic event, causing the annihilation of mankind.

The “radioactive tuna” and the rain containing lethal fallout produced by the test sent shock waves throughout Japan. The Daigo Fukuryu Maru incident triggered a movement against atomic and hydrogen bombs and renewed heightened public awareness about victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

But the March 1, 1954, hydrogen bomb test was just one of more than 500 nuclear tests that had been carried out in the atmosphere by 1980.

A recently discovered U.S. official document showed that the U.S. government had set up 122 stations around the globe to monitor the radioactive fallout from the hydrogen bomb test. The objective of these facilities was to estimate the degree of pollution caused to the Earth by the test. We cannot help but wonder how much serious effort was actually made to limit the negative effects of the test on human health.

Bikini islanders were forced to leave their hometowns. More than six decades later, they still cannot return there. Many local residents living around other former test sites in various parts of the world are also complaining of health problems. But the world’s nuclear powers have generally been unsympathetic to such complaints.

Under the pretext that nuclear weapons are vital for national security, many people have been forced to endure suffering and misery. This fact inevitably reminds us that nuclear arms are, by their nature, inhuman.

Ten months after the test on Bikini Atoll, the United States agreed to pay more than 700 million yen to Japan. But the money was paid as “sympathy money,” because the U.S. government refused to admit its responsibility for a compensation payment.

When six nuclear tests were conducted between March and May 1954 on Bikini Atoll, a total of 1,000 Japanese boats and ships are also estimated to have been sailing in nearby waters.

Compensation, however, was paid only for part of the damage caused by the testing to fishing in the area. Former crew members of these vessels, who suspect that they are suffering from health problems caused by exposure to radiation from the tests, along with interested researchers, are demanding efforts to address their concerns. But the Japanese government has not made a serious response to their demands, treating the issue as something that has been concluded.

However, official documents that have been declassified in recent years revealed behind-the-scenes diplomatic maneuverings by the United States to quickly resolve the matter. Concerned about a possible surge of anti-U.S. sentiment among the Japanese public, Washington, for example, applied pressure on Japan to halt an investigation into contaminated tuna.

If nuclear energy were to get out of control, people and society would suffer immeasurable damage. Trying to hide the reality as much as possible seems to be a natural propensity of those who utilize nuclear energy, either through weapons or through power plants.

Let us take a fresh, hard look at what occurred at Bikini Atoll six decades ago. In thinking about man's relationship with nuclear power, it is essential to examine the facts about the test and uncover details about the damage it caused, one by one.

--The Asahi Shimbun, March 1

Antinuke rally in Tokyo

March 9, 2014

THREE YEARS AFTER: Anti-nuke rally held across Japan ahead of Fukushima anniversary

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201403090024

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Banging on drums and waving "Sayonara nukes" signs, thousands of people rallied in a Tokyo park and marched to Parliament on March 9 to demand an end to nuclear power ahead of the third anniversary of the Fukushima disaster.

Participants at the demonstration, one of several planned across cities in Japan, said they would never forget the March 11, 2011, nuclear disaster, the worst since Chernobyl.

They also vowed to block a move by the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to restart some of the 48 idled reactors and backpedal on the commitment by the previous government to aggressively reduce the nation's reliance on nuclear power. Oil imports have soared since the disaster, hurting the economy.

Katsutoshi Sato, a retired railway worker at the rally, was holding a fishing pole with a picture of a fish dangling at the end to highlight his worries about radiation contaminating the rivers.

"The protests are growing," he said, noting he was taking part in his third anti-nuclear demonstration. "All kinds of people are joining, including families with kids."

Protests calling a nuclear-free Japan have popped up across the nation over the last three years, as the usually docile and conformist Japanese begin to question the government's assurances that nuclear power is safe.

The movement has also drawn celebrities like Ryuichi Sakamoto, who shared an Oscar for "The Last Emperor" score, and Nobel Prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe.

The Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, which exploded and underwent three core meltdowns, continues to spew radiation into the air and sea. Decommissioning is expected to take decades.

Robert Geller, a seismologist at the University of Tokyo, said it was troubling that after three years there is no full explanation on what went wrong at Fukushima, and how to avoid a recurrence.

Anti-nuclear protest on 3rd-year anniversary

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140309_25.html

Anti-nuclear activists staged a rally in Tokyo on Sunday ahead of the 3rd anniversary of the March 11th accident at the Fukushima nuclear plant.

The protesters marched through the streets toward the Diet building. They held up placards demanding the elimination of nuclear power plants for the protection of children.

They surrounded the parliament building, saying the nation's nuclear plants should not be restarted.

A 62-year-old woman from Kawauchi Village, Fukushima Prefecture, joined the rally with her 5-year-old granddaughter.

She said she thinks the situation is getting worse rather than better 3 years after the accident. She said she wanted to raise awareness that the people who live in Fukushima are still facing difficulties.

A 41-year-old Tokyo resident said this is the first time she has taken her 1st-grade daughter to a demonstration. She said she hopes the experience will cause her daughter to start thinking about nuclear power plants.

The organizer said about 10,000 people took to the streets. Police put the figure at about 4,000.
Mar. 9, 2014 - Updated 12:58 UTC

35,000 antinukes in Tokyo

March 10, 2014

32,000 join anti-nuclear power rally in Tokyo: organizers

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140310p2a00m0na004000c.html>

Massive anti-nuclear power demonstrations drew tens of thousands of people near the Diet building and other locations in central Tokyo on March 9, with participants protesting against reactor restarts ahead of the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant disaster.

"Let's stand by those who cannot raise their voices, and respond to their outcry," said musician Ryuichi Sakamoto during a rally held at the Hibiya Open-Air Concert Hall in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward.

"The situation in Fukushima has been set back rather than remaining unchanged. We will further raise our voices to bring about zero nuclear power," said Misao Redwolf, a leader of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes (MCAN).

MCAN and other organizers of the demonstrations put the number of participants in the March 9 protests at a total of some 32,000.

Participants paraded down the streets near the prime minister's office and the Diet building, chanting, "No to nuclear power" and "Stop exporting nuclear plants," before encircling the Diet building.

Tadao Ito, 75, a resident of Tokyo's Chofu who took part in the protest with oxygen tubes attached to his nose and pulling an oxygen tank due to lung disease told the Mainichi, "I'm struggling with my health problems, but I'd like to express my opposition" to nuclear power.

Shozaburo Oga, 58, a company operator from Sagamihara, Kanagawa Prefecture, said, "There's no way they can restart nuclear reactors when the cause of the Fukushima nuclear disaster has yet to be

determined. Such a move disregards the nuclear disaster and those who were affected by the catastrophe."

A series of protests against nuclear power will be held in at least 175 locations across the nation around March 11 -- the third anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which triggered the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant meltdowns.
March 10, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Fujinami frustrated by fading interest in nukes

March 12, 2014

THREE YEARS AFTER: Anti-nuclear idol Fujinami frustrated by waning interest

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201403120006>

By NORIYUKI KANETA/ Staff Writer

Stardom is often fleeting for aspiring idols, but for Cocoro Fujinami, the fading interest she has seen is particularly frustrating.

At just 14 years old, Fujinami was propelled into the spotlight as a star of the anti-nuclear movement, a junior high school student whose popularity became comparable to those of members of ubiquitous girl group AKB48.

But now, three years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami caused the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, Fujinami feels the issue of nuclear power generation has lost its importance in Japan.

"People of my generation often tell me, 'Are you still calling for a nuclear-free society?' or 'Don't you think that the issue is old?'" she said. "I feel anxiety when I hear those remarks."

Fujinami said she will continue to spread her anti-nuclear views although she realizes that fewer people are now listening to her words.

She received quite the opposite reaction after the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant started unfolding in March 2011.

Back then, as a so-called B-grade idol performing mainly in Tokyo's Akihabara district, she wrote on her blog a thought that occurred to her: "Everybody says that the accident was beyond the scope of imagination. But I think that, concerning nuclear power plants, an accident beyond the scope of imagination must never occur because it causes such enormous damage."

Fujinami was then a relatively unknown second-year junior high school student from Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture, who had posed as a gravure model and appeared in film.

But after her anti-nuclear posting, her blog rose to the top rankings among idols and other TV personalities.

About 15,000 comments were posted in response to her opinion: "In the case of a nuclear accident, the people concerned cannot fix the situation no matter how hard they work. That's why we must make our society nuclear-free."

Sixty to 70 percent of the comments supported her view.

However, others criticized and even insulted the teenager. One post said she was overly "sentimental." Others accused her of commenting on something she knew very little about.

Another comment read, "What you are doing is a fatuous publicity stunt."

Recalling those comments, Fujinami said: "I was mentally shocked and became reclusive. But I disclosed those comments (on my blog) one by one, hoping that they would activate discussions."

Her blog did fuel debate on nuclear energy. And those opposed to nuclear power were quick to lionize the student. Fujinami was invited to speak and sing at a number of rallies, and she was referred to as the "Joan of Arc" of the anti-nuclear movement.

However, in the three years since the nuclear disaster started, Fujinami feels that other topics are taking precedence.

She wrote on Twitter, “Before (the reactors at) the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant cool down, Japanese people’s interest in nuclear issues have cooled down.”

The administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appears intent on restarting idled nuclear reactors while attention has turned to his efforts to revive the economy and strengthen Japan’s security posture.

Fujinami said that even her anti-nuclear friends have recently been saying, “The establishment of a nuclear-free society is important, but”

She said their words add to her frustration.

“(Hearing those remarks,) I feel that although the issues concerning the Constitution or the consumption tax are also important, a nuclear accident blows away all those issues,” Fujinami said.

She said the “tangled strings” of society have become more tangled, and that society is confused on the definition of real happiness and affluence.

She recalled the discomfort she felt three years ago when people commented on her anti-nuclear actions.

“You are great despite being only 14 years old,” “You can become a politician,” and “I want you to abolish nuclear power plants as soon as possible.”

Fujinami said reaching her goal will require a much wider effort.

“Not only I but also everyone should make efforts (to create a nuclear-free society),” she wrote on Twitter.

Nukes and humans cannot co-exist in harmony

VOX POPULI: Humans not cut out to control nuclear energy

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/vox/AJ201403110033>

Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a daily column that runs on Page 1 of the vernacular Asahi Shimbun.

Rice paddies were covered with weeds that had withered and turned brown. Green plastic sheets covered piles of radiation-tainted soil collected through decontamination work. Barricades were placed here and there across roads and entryways to homes to prevent people from going through. Radiation levels in the bus kept rising.

As I recently traveled through the “difficult-to-return zones” on my way to the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, I recalled the day I interviewed an expert on national land development while covering the aftermath of the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995. Ultimately, there is probably no place in Japan where people can live in absolute safety. That is our destiny, the expert told me.

Massive natural disasters rage beyond human wisdom. Three years ago, in addition to natural disasters in the form of an earthquake and tsunami, a terrible man-made accident took place at a nuclear power plant, which had been shrouded in a myth of safety. Even now, the exact cause of the accident has yet to be determined. I find myself increasingly thinking that nuclear energy is also something that is beyond human wisdom and control.

I toured the premises of the Fukushima nuclear plant. A large number of water storage tanks stand close together. As recently as February, about 100 tons of highly radioactive water was found to have leaked. A major construction project is under way to block underground water from getting close to the nuclear reactors. The situation is far from being “under control,” as declared by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

After the disaster, I heard that an executive of an electric power company blurted out: “Because it is national policy”

It sounded as if the company was engaged in nuclear power generation because the government told it to do so, but actually, the work is too dangerous for a private company to handle. If that is what he really meant, I felt that the safety myth was flimsy.

The Abe administration is currently pushing ahead toward restarting idle nuclear power plants. Is it trying to patch up the broken myth again? Nuclear power and humans cannot co-exist in harmony. This is clear from the desolate land around the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

--The Asahi Shimbun, March 11

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Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a popular daily column that takes up a wide range of topics, including culture, arts and social trends and developments. Written by veteran Asahi Shimbun writers, the column provides useful perspectives on and insights into contemporary Japan and its culture.

Jaczko: The question is, are you for or against?

March 14, 2014

U.S. ex-nuclear chief: Fukushima lesson is phase-out

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140314p2g00m0dm037000c.html>

TOKYO (AP) -- As radiation spewed from Japan's nuclear disaster three years ago, the top U.S. atomic energy regulator issued a 50-mile evacuation warning for any Americans in the area, a response some found extreme.

Gregory Jaczko, who stepped down as chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in 2012, still believes he was right, and says the events at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi plant show that nuclear power should be phased out in Japan and worldwide.

"The lesson has to be: This kind of accident is unacceptable to society. And that's not me saying it. That's society saying that," he said in an interview this week in Tokyo, where he is giving lectures and speaking on panels marking the third anniversary of the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami that overwhelmed the Fukushima plant.

Now a lecturer at Princeton University, Jaczko, 43, has become a hit on the speaking circuit in Japan, where all 48 nuclear plants remain offline as the country debates what role nuclear power should play in its future.

The government is pushing forward with a plan to restart several reactors after safety checks, despite continuing public opposition. Nuclear regulators announced Thursday they are beginning the final approval process for the restart of two reactors at a plant on the southernmost main island of Kyushu.

Jaczko said he had always been concerned about nuclear safety. But so much unfolded at Fukushima that experts were unprepared for, that it changed his view, and that of the Japanese public, on nuclear power.

Chernobyl and Three Mile Island were major accidents, but for Jackso, Fukushima definitively undermined industry assumptions such as multiple accidents were unlikely or hydrogen leaks would be controlled.

Three of the reactors at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant had meltdowns, and two had hydrogen explosions. The idea that a plant wouldn't be under control three or four days after an accident was unthinkable before Fukushima, he said.

"We have defined safety measures against the things that we kind of know. An accident is going to be something that we didn't predict," he said.

During the Fukushima crisis, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff discussed possible evacuation zones of between 20 miles and 50 miles, and given the uncertainty, opted for 50 miles, he said. A 50-mile evacuation has never been adopted as a standard for disaster scenarios in the U.S.

Jaczko said it luck the wind blew in a direction that sent much of the radiation out to sea.

His resignation from the NRC, three years into his five-year term as chairman, followed complaints about his management style. He says he could no longer support the licensing of reactors in the U.S. after Fukushima.

Yotaro Hatamura, an honorary professor at the University of Tokyo who took part in a government investigation of Fukushima, said the right decision on nuclear power can't be made without addressing the what-if scenarios of accidents.

"A true debate is needed, but all we're getting is: Are you for or against nuclear power?" he said, sitting with Jaczko on a recent panel at the Japan Press Center.

March 14, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Words of caution from evacuees

March 14, 2014

Fukushima evacuees offer cautionary tale against reactor restarts

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201403140062>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

SATSUMA-SENDAI, Kagoshima Prefecture--Fukushima evacuees say they are concerned over what they see is a rapid shift away from the public's anti-nuclear sentiment as two reactors at a nuclear plant in southern Kyushu have been placed on the shortlist for safety screenings.

On March 13, the Nuclear Regulation Authority said it will give priority to examining the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant in Satsuma-Sendai, a prerequisite to restarting shuttered reactors. The two Kyushu Electric Power Co. reactors are expected to resume operations as early as this summer if the safety screenings go according to schedule.

"We've gotten over a big hump," Hideo Iwakiri, the city's mayor, told a news conference. "I believe (the Sendai plant) is the safest, most secure nuclear power plant in Japan."

Victims of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami three years ago remain wary. The nation's 48 reactors are currently offline in the wake of the accident and must pass tougher safety regulations to be restarted.

"I hope people will open their eyes to the reality of Fukushima, rather than blindly go forward with the resumption of operations," said Yasuo Fujita, 61, an evacuee from the town of Namie, located a few kilometers north of the Fukushima nuclear plant, who now lives in Tokyo's Koto Ward. "The accident has deprived us of our living and ruined the rest of our lives."

Fujita said he cannot completely dismiss the desire for an early restart of the reactors by residents in the areas surrounding the Sendai nuclear plant. Still, he said there is no need to rush to restart operations at the Sendai plant.

Kagoshima Governor Yuichiro Ito, who has been working eagerly to bring the reactors back online as soon as possible, said, "The prefectural government will keep careful watch over the screening process."

He has said he hopes to have the prefectural assembly green-light the restart of the plant by the June assembly session.

Kagoshima Prefecture has budgeted 12 million yen (\$117,000) to hold three explanatory sessions for residents. It currently plans to conduct hearings in Satsuma-Sendai and another city in the prefecture to win the consent of citizens after the NRA's checks are completed.

Ito and Iwakiri say it will be possible for the plant to resume operations if the operator gains approval from the assemblies and the leadership in both the prefecture and the city. However, surrounding municipalities insist their consent is also needed before operations can restart.

An Asahi Shimbun survey of eight municipalities within a 30-kilometer radius of the Sendai plant found that four are demanding their approval be secured in advance of restarting the reactors. That survey did not include Satsuma-Sendai.

In addition, 40 percent of 134 cities, towns and villages within 30 km of nuclear plants across the nation said they have yet to work out their evacuation plans in the event of another accident, according to the Asahi Shimbun survey.

A pear farmer from the town of Okuma in Fukushima said the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 plant showed there are no "safe" nuclear facilities.

"It remains unclear what is happening to the reactors in Fukushima. A succession of crises, such as water leaks, have been reported," said farmer Kiyoe Kamata, 71, whose home is located just three kilometers from the crippled facility. "How can we conclude that other plants are safe?"

The former Okuma resident, who currently lives in Sukagawa, Fukushima Prefecture, about 50 km from his home, asked for careful consideration for the restarting of reactors.

"Although three years have passed (since the earthquake and tsunami), we have no idea where we are going from here," Kamata said. "Careful judgments will be needed in order to avoid a situation where more people could be forced to face similar difficulties like the ones we are now suffering."

Lost confidence

March 15, 2014

The Fukushima tragedy justifies nuclear skepticism

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2014/03/15/commentary/the-fukushima-tragedy-justifies-nuclear-skepticism/#.UyRaHIXrV1s>

by Jeff Kingston

The findings of a Kyodo survey conducted in February this year reveal **a stunning level of reluctance to restart Japan's nuclear reactors in the host cities, towns and prefectures that stand to gain from revving them back up.**

The nation's 48 viable reactors are generating no electricity at present — and no local subsidies as long as they are idled. However, the spigot of financial inducements would open up again if the local governments in question were to green-light reactor restarts.

Despite this lure, though, only 13 out of the 135 villages, towns, cities and 21 prefectures situated within 30 km of a nuclear power plant responded to the survey saying they would unconditionally approve bringing local reactors back online if the Nuclear Regulation Authority vouched for their safety; another 24 would do so only if certain other conditions were met. It is a stunning rebuke that less than 10 percent of those authorities are keen to sign up for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's nuclear renaissance despite all the foregone benefits. It's not what one would expect given the high subsidy-addiction that afflicts these hosting communities.

And lest we forget, these hosting sites were specifically selected because they were dying, remote communities with no other options — and many of them grabbed the nuclear lifeline with gusto.

So now, these desperate towns that are so dependent on the nuclear industry for their operating budgets have got cold feet about nuclear energy and are reconsidering their Faustian bargain

What's the matter with these usually reliable supporters of nuclear energy?

Apparently, **they now realize that they have been fed a pack of lies by the utilities and the government about reactor safety** — and they understand just how unprepared everyone was when catastrophe struck on March 11, 2011. In addition, **they have no confidence that those in charge now are any better prepared for the next nuclear disaster.**

Why would they be? There have been no evacuation drills for the newly extended 30-kilometer evacuation zones that have vastly increased the logistical difficulties of getting people out of harm's way in time; three years ago, chaos reigned as authorities improvised evacuations in far smaller zones, managing to relocate people from relatively safe areas to hot zones with high levels of radioactive contamination.

One key lesson of Fukushima is that you don't want to be practicing an evacuation when the reactors are spewing radiation.

Hosting communities can also see the crass negligence of both the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the stricken plant, regarding the good folk of Fukushima Prefecture who have been left high and dry by the three meltdowns in March 2011.

On Feb. 27, 2014, national broadcaster NHK's "Close-Up Gendai" TV program focused on the plight of some 130,000 "nuclear refugees" still languishing in temporary housing three years on, still waiting for answers and compassion, and baffled and disheartened by incomprehensible loss amplified by institutional betrayal.

Many of these citizens have received only pittance of compensation and have effectively been abandoned to their fates.

"Close-Up Gendai," and another NHK special aired on March 8, are timely reminders that **Japan's Chernobyl remains a grim humanitarian crisis of epic proportions that has turned lives upside down, divided families and destroyed communities** that had the misfortune of being located near the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. Evacuees have had to abandon ancestral homes, their prospects for ever returning remain slim as decontamination and decommissioning of the plant is slated to take four decades. Not many will be around for a 2050 revival. Already livelihoods have been lost and there is an ongoing exodus of young people who see no future in Fukushima.

Since March 2011, **David Slater**, a professor of anthropology at Sophia University in Tokyo, has undertaken extensive fieldwork in the affected Tohoku region of northeastern Honshu. He has also edited an excellent book, **"Japan Copes with Calamity" (2013)**, that presents insightful ethnographic studies on blighted communities and details how people are experiencing the aftermath. Drawing on his ground-level experience, Slater is pessimistic about the future of "communities with as few as half of the pre-3/11 population remaining."

As he sees it, "This has created such thinned-out populations that parents worry about schools and the viability of basic public services. But maybe the more depressing shock is that for those people who have waited all of this time — because either they are committed to staying and rebuilding their communities or because they have no place else to go — only to find that the plans that have been approved have little space for them. The land identified for relocation is too expensive for them to afford.

“The more general lesson is that the whole post-3/11 process of creating a relocation plan left many without any input into it or its implementation.” Consequently, he points out, “Many feel disenfranchised by the process and disoriented by the resulting product - the plan.”

Meanwhile, the ongoing leaks of radioactive water and various glitches in the decommissioning and decontamination work are unsettling for many Fukushima residents who have run out of options.

As Slater notes, “The Fukushima communities are still in a holding pattern ... those who have been vocal about the dangers of radiation, and those who have now swallowed their words (if not their fear) under pressure to not ‘stand in the way of recovery,’ point to the lack of any certainty, security, safety.

“One mom (who left with her son and is now back in the community) simply said, ‘We cannot think about this anymore. If we do, we are forced to leave forever or we have to think about living in danger. Right now, our family cannot leave. This has become normal; it is bad, but that seems to be the way it will be for us from now on.’”

Abe’s undeclared fourth arrow aiming to turn Japan’s fortunes around is a nuclear renaissance that involves downplaying risks, restarting reactors and exporting reactor technology and equipment while ignoring the plight of Fukushima’s displaced families — decent ordinary citizens who suddenly woke up in an unending nuclear nightmare.

The safety myth is being recalibrated, but remains based on rosy assumptions in a nation especially prone to massive seismic disasters.

The rush to reactor restarts is being justified in terms of surging fuel imports that have driven trade figures into the red. But what about Fukushima’s spiraling \$100- billion price tag and Tepco’s bailout sucking on taxpayers like a vampire squid?

“Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster” (2014), by David Lochbaum, Edwin Lyman and Susan Stranahan, is a riveting and meticulous account of the disaster as it unfolded. The authors immerse us in the prevailing confusion, missteps, faulty assumptions, poor risk-management, willful negligence and sheer incompetence — all while making the scientific jargon understandable and exposing a number of pseudo-scientific claims by industry advocates.

In discussing other nuclear accidents, and lessons ignored, the authors also remind us that regulators and utilities have short memories and a tendency to shortchange safety.

Maybe the nuclear village of vested pro-nuclear interests will get it right this time — though hosting communities and the vast majority of Japanese people remain skeptical for good reasons.

Jeff Kingston is the director of Asian Studies, Temple University Japan.

Demonstrators against restart

March 15, 2014

Over 5,000 rally in Tokyo against nuclear reactor restarts

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/03/15/national/over-5000-rally-in-tokyo-against-nuclear-reactor-restarts/#.UyW4yIXrV1v>

AFP-JIJI

More than 5,000 anti-nuclear campaigners rallied in Tokyo on Saturday as the government and utilities move toward restarting reactors in Kyushu.

he protesters gathered at Hibiya Park in central Tokyo to urge the government not to approve the reactivation of any nuclear plant. Regulators are currently reviewing whether to allow Kyushu Electric Power Co. to fire up two reactors at its Sendai atomic power plant.

“Japan is prone to earthquakes. We have to seriously think about whether nuclear power is a good idea for Japan,” said Masatoshi Harada, 60, who joined fellow protesters at the park and marched with them later toward the Ginza shopping district.

“This is an opportunity for Japan to abandon nuclear power,” he said.

Last week, tens of thousands held a rally at the same site to voice fears about any reliance on nuclear power.

Saturday’s event came days after the nation marked the third anniversary of the 9.0-magnitude quake and tsunami that swamped Tohoku’s coastline on March 11, 2011, setting in motion the Fukushima nuclear crisis. The twin natural disasters killed 15,884 people and left another 2,633 still unaccounted for.

They also knocked out cooling systems at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, where three reactors suffered core meltdowns and a fourth was badly damaged by hydrogen explosions. The wrecked reactors spewed massive amounts of radioactive fallout over the region.

No one is officially listed as having died as a direct result of the nuclear meltdowns, but at least 1,656 people have died as a result of complications linked to stress and other factors after having to evacuate their homes.

Supporters of nuclear power, including Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, say the country needs atomic energy to revive the world's third-largest economy. But protesters argue that Japan can live without nuclear power, as it has done for a prolonged period.

All of the nation's 50 commercial reactors have remained offline due to tense public opposition to restarting them. "Nuclear plants have been closed, so you cannot say we cannot live without nuclear energy," one of the protesters, Junichi Okano, said Saturday.

6,000 demonstrators in Kagoshima

March 17, 2014

Demonstrators turn out in force in Kagoshima to oppose Sendai plant restart

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201403170063>

By HIROKI KOIKE/ Staff Writer

KAGOSHIMA--An estimated 6,000 anti-nuclear activists rallied on March 16 here to protest the Nuclear Regulation Authority's decision to short-list reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant for safety screenings--a prelude to their restart.

A Fukushima evacuee who was forced to flee her home after the meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant that were triggered by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami denounced the NRA's decision to grant priority to the facility for the screenings.

"Although three years have passed (since the disaster started to unfurl), the situation facing Fukushima has not changed," said Masumi Kowata, 58. "Please don't restart the reactors."

Marching in the central part of Kagoshima city, the demonstrators shouted, "Their restarts will never be forgiven" and "We want to live on an Earth that has no nuclear plants."

The No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the Sendai plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, operated by Kyushu Electric Power Co., have remained shuttered as a consequence of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. They may resume operations as early as this summer barring any unforeseen problems during the screening process.

"Han-Genpatsu Kagoshima Net" (Anti-Nuclear Kagoshima Network) and other citizen groups who organized the event estimated the size of the demonstration. If the number is accurate, that would make it the largest-ever anti-nuclear gathering in the prefecture.

Thousands rally against nukes

Thousands in Japan protest nuclear power, conditions at Fukushima

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/3/15/japan-protesterssaynotonuclearpower.html>

March 15, 2014 10:42PM ET

As regulators look to restart two reactors in southern Japan, workers at crippled Daiichi plant talk of dangers, low pay

Thousands of people in Tokyo have rallied against nuclear power as the government and utilities prepare to restart reactors in southern Japan.

More than 5,000 protesters gathered at Hibiya Park in Tokyo on Saturday to pressure the government not to restart the country's nuclear power stations.

"Japan is prone to earthquakes. We have to seriously think about whether nuclear power is a good idea for Japan," said protester Masatoshi Harada. "This is an opportunity for Japan to drop nuclear power."

Regulators are currently reviewing whether to let Kyushu Electric Power restart two reactors at its Sendai power plant.

Saturday's demonstration came days after the country marked the third anniversary of a 9.0-magnitude earthquake that struck northern Japan in March 2011.

The earthquake prompted a deadly tsunami along the northern Pacific coastline and huge waves swamped already damaged cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, resulting in three reactor meltdowns and explosions that spewed radioactive materials into the vast, rural region.

The wrecked plant, which continues to vent radionuclides into the atmosphere and leak tens of thousands of gallons of contaminated water into the Pacific Ocean, is expected to take at least 40 years to stabilize. The surrounding area will show high levels of radioactive contamination for decades to come.

On Friday, nearly 100 workers who helped to clean up the crippled plant rallied outside the headquarters of Fukushima operator Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), complaining they were forced to work for meager pay in dangerous conditions

Workers also rallied outside Maeda Corp Friday, one of the contractors hired to clean up the plant and surrounding areas.

The earthquake and tsunami killed 15,884 people and left 2,633 people still missing.

Supporters of nuclear power, including the prime minister, Shinzo Abe, said Japan needs atomic energy to ensure the economic health of the world's third largest economy.

But protesters at Saturday's demonstration argued that the country can live without nuclear power as it has done for most of the last 36 months.

"Nuclear plants have been closed, so you cannot say we cannot live without nuclear energy," anti-nuclear campaigner Junichi Okano said.

All of the nation's roughly 50 commercial nuclear reactors have gradually been shut down since 2011 and remain offline due to unprecedented public opposition to restarting them.

Workplace hazards

Questions have continued to mount about the working conditions created by the web of Fukushima contractors and sub-contractors.

Several thousand employees at the plant are locked in a daily and dangerous scramble to keep the site from again spiraling out of control, making myriad repairs and building tanks for the vast amounts of water contaminated after being used to cool the fractured reactors.

Some demonstrators on Friday said they received far less pay than promised as various layers of bosses docked money for supplying meals, transportation and other expenses.

They also said many had not received a 10,000 yen daily premium (\$98) for decontamination work.

“Workers at the Fukushima plant have been forced to do unreasonable tasks with no decent safety measures,” said one man in his 30s, who declined to give his name.

He said he was laid off after several months in the job due to heavy radiation exposure.

“Workers are forced to handle contaminated water in such grim working conditions, where any human being should not be put to work,” he said.

“They tend to make easy mistakes under the pressure, but it’s not they who are at fault — it’s the conditions that force them to do terrible tasks.”

Maeda Corp did not immediately respond to a request for comment about working conditions in the stricken area.

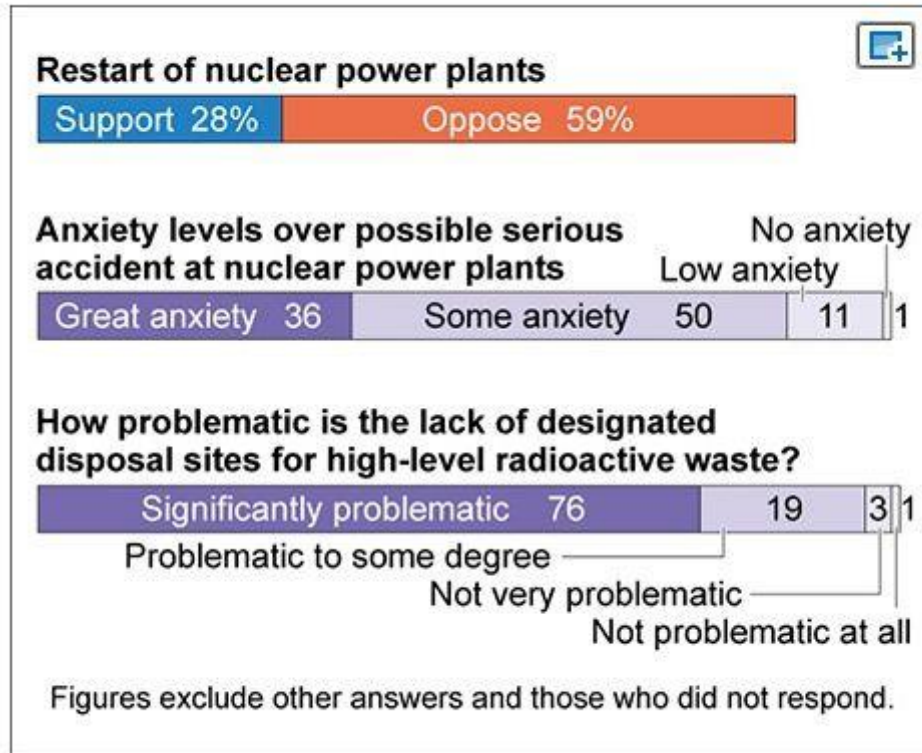
Al Jazeera and AFP

Majority continue to oppose restart

March 18, 2014

ASAHI POLL: 59% oppose restart of nuclear reactors

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201403180058>



THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A majority of respondents continue to oppose bringing idle nuclear reactors back online, despite moves by the Abe administration to allow restarts as soon as this summer, according to an Asahi Shimbun poll.

Fifty-nine percent of the respondents said they were opposed to the restart of nuclear power plants, outnumbering the 28 percent who said they supported the move, according to the nationwide telephone poll conducted March 15-16. The Asahi Shimbun randomly contacted 3,402 eligible voters, excluding some parts of Fukushima Prefecture, where the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant is located. It received 1,721 valid responses, or 51 percent of the total contacted.

The newspaper asked the same question in previous surveys conducted in July, September last year and this January. In each of the past polls, 56 percent of the respondents opposed the restart of reactors.

The latest survey revealed that 39 percent of men supported putting the reactors back online, while 51 percent were opposed. Sixty-six percent of women opposed the move, while 18 percent supported it.

Regarding a nuclear phase-out plan, 77 percent said they supported one, while only 14 percent were opposed.

Asked about how anxious they feel about the possibility of a serious accident at a nuclear power plant other than the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, 36 percent said they were “greatly” anxious, and 50 percent said they were anxious “to some degree.”

Although the figure for those who replied “greatly” declined from 52 percent in the May 2011 survey, the ratio of those who were anxious “greatly” or “to some degree” still constituted nearly 90 percent of the respondents. Even among the respondents who supported the restart of reactors, 69 percent replied they were anxious about the possibility of a severe accident.

On the issue that disposal sites for high-level radioactive waste from spent fuel at reactors have yet to be designated, 76 percent said it is “significantly problematic” and 19 percent said it is “problematic to some degree.” Even those who supported the resumption of reactors, 56 percent selected “significantly” and 34 percent chose “to some degree.”

The Nuclear Regulation Authority plans to draft safety inspection reports on the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture, ahead of other reactors. The reactors could be brought back online as early as this summer provided they pass a tightened safety screening process. Currently, all 48 of the nation's reactors are offline.

Hakodate's lawsuit against planned nuclear plant

March 27, 2014

Hakodate to sue over planned nuclear plant in northern Aomori

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140327p2a00m0na003000c.html>

HAKODATE, Hokkaido -- The city assembly here voted unanimously on March 26 to seek an injunction to halt construction of the Oma Nuclear Power Plant in Oma, Aomori Prefecture -- the first such move against a nuclear plant.

Officials plan to take legal action against the national government and J-POWER, the plant's prospective owner, on April 3. At its closest point, the plant would lie just 23 kilometers from Hakodate's borders. The municipal government complains that the city would be greatly affected should an accident occur at the plant.

Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo said the unanimous vote for legal action was reassuring.

"In court, we'd like to raise the question of whether it is appropriate to construct the Oma Nuclear Power Plant without giving us an explanatory briefing or obtaining our consent," he said.

Two of the Hakodate Municipal Assembly's 30 members sat out the vote, protesting that energy policies should be the domain of the national government, and that if the city were to lose the suit it would give legitimacy to the plant's construction.

A representative from J-POWER's PR department said, "We will refrain from commenting on the lawsuit, but we will continue to explain to the Hakodate Municipal Government, as we have been, that we will take the necessary safety precautions."

Oma Mayor Mitsuharu Kanazawa refrained from commenting on the Hakodate Municipal Assembly's move.

J-POWER plans to apply this fall for a safety evaluation of the Oma plant under new nuclear power plant regulatory standards.

March 27, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

March 26, 2014

Hakodate assembly OKs lawsuit against nuclear plant

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/03/26/national/hakodate-assembly-oks-lawsuit-against-nuclear-plant/#.UzQCT4XrV1s>

HAKODATE, HOKKAIDO – The municipal assembly of Hakodate in Hokkaido on Wednesday approved a plan to sue the central government and an electric utility to stop construction of a nuclear power plant in neighboring Aomori Prefecture.

The assembly plans to file the lawsuit with the Tokyo District Court as early as April 3 in what will be the first nuclear power-related lawsuit against the central government by a local government.

Located at the southern tip of Hokkaido, Hakodate is only 23 km across the Tsugaru Strait from the Oma plant, which Electric Power Development Co., better known as J-Power, started building in May 2008.

“In the event of an accident, Hakodate’s core industries of fishery and tourism would suffer devastating damage,” Mayor Toshiki Kudo said after the assembly unanimously approved the suit.

Construction of the 1,383-megawatt plant was suspended in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011 but was resumed in October 2012.

J-Power plans to apply to the Nuclear Regulation Authority for safety assessment of the plant as early as this autumn. The plant will house an advanced boiling water reactor using plutonium-uranium mixed oxide fuel, which contains plutonium extracted from spent fuel.

March 26, 2014

City to file for injunction of new nuclear plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140326_34.html

A city in northern Japan has decided to file for an injunction against the building of a nuclear power plant.

The municipal assembly of Hakodate City on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido made the decision on Wednesday.

Its members unanimously approved a bill to allow the city authority to use tax money to stop construction of the Oma nuclear plant in Aomori Prefecture. The facility is being built 23 kilometers south of the city, across the Tsugaru Strait.

The defendants in the injunction suit would be the central government and the plant's Tokyo-based operator, J-Power.

Hakodate plans to bring the suit to the Tokyo District Court next Thursday. The municipality would be the first in Japan to file against the building of a nuclear plant.

The construction was halted in the wake of the 2011 tsunami and earthquake disaster. J-Power resumed the work in 2012 and plans to apply for a safety inspection as early as this fall to launch the plant.

Hakodate authorities say the plant could severely damage the city in the event of a nuclear accident.

Mayor Toshiki Kudo thanked the assembly members, saying he respects their courage and action.

Mar. 26, 2014 - Updated 10:26 UTC

"Unwelcome science"

March 27, 2014

Unwelcome Science: Japan Ignores UN Rapporteur's Call for Better Fukushima Health Measures
<http://akiomatsumura.com/>

March 27, 2014 Environment, Japan, Nuclear, United Nations

"Why don't we have a urine analysis, why don't we have a blood analysis? Let's err on the side of caution."

UN Special Rapporteur Anand Grover, who visited Fukushima in 2012, spoke in Tokyo this month about the continued lack of appropriate health research surrounding Fukushima and related health issues.



Since shortly after the Fukushima accident three years ago, doctors throughout Fukushima prefecture have been looking for unusual cysts, nodes, and other bumps that might indicate thyroid cancer, one possible effect of radiation. The numbers of irregularities the doctors have been finding is alarming, but also puzzling: By most counts, thyroid cancers should only begin to show up five years or so after radiation exposure.

What, then, should Japanese doctors and health officials do with this information?

Information and caution, it turns out, are unwelcome in Japan. The country plans to restart its nuclear reactors and move Fukushima's refugees back into the former evacuation zones. Any studies pointing to negative effects of radiation exposure will hinder this move toward economic progress.

So, Japan has taken subtle measures to slow any proof that these moves aren't in its citizens' best interest. Japan can hamper scientific studies that can lead to new information and evidence in two ways: by cutting funding and by imposing a culture of secrecy and an unwillingness to talk to the press among researchers. A March 16 article by David McNeill in the New York Times chronicled this process. Timothy Mosseau, a researcher from the University of South Carolina, has found his three trips to the Fukushima area "difficult." He told the *Times*:

"It's pretty clear that there is self-censorship or professors have been warned by their superiors that they must be very, very careful," he said.

The "more insidious censorship" is the lack of funding at a national level for these kinds of studies, he added. "They're putting trillions of yen into moving dirt around and almost nothing into environmental assessment." Ken Buessler, another American scientist who has made several trips to the water outside Japan, also spoke with the *Times*:

"Researchers are told not to talk to the press, or they don't feel comfortable about talking to the press without permission," Mr. Buessler said. A veteran of three post-earthquake research trips to Japan, he wants the authorities to put more money into investigating the impact on the food chain of Fukushima's release of cesium and strontium. "Why isn't the Japanese government paying for this, since they have most to gain?"

If researchers are financially hamstrung and stifled within Japan, another option is another country or institution with enough clout with or power over the Japanese government to order an effective and independent assessment of the country's health risks from Fukushima.

Tokyo will host the 2020 Summer Olympic Games. A main concern of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the body that organizes and oversees the Olympics, in awarding Tokyo the games was the state of Fukushima and its ongoing issues. Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe personally stepped in and assured IOC's then-president Jacques Rogge that Fukushima was "in safe hands".

As the *New York Times* Editorial Board made clear on March 21, the current state of cleanup is "shameful" – definitely not in safe hands. And as scientists in and outside of Japan tell us, there are not enough

experiments underway to give us a clear picture of the environmental, scientific, or health situation in Japan, never mind assure us it is safe.

Earlier this year, Helen Caldicott, MD, sent a letter to Thomas Bach, the IOC's current president (bio), outlining eight concerns for the health of our Olympic athletes sent to Tokyo in 2020. She concludes:

"It is for these reasons that I strongly recommend that you urge the International Olympic Committee to assemble an independent assessment team of biomedical experts, who have no financial or other relationship with the nuclear power industry or its regulators, to carry out a diligent investigation of all relevant areas to determine the extent of radiogenic health concerns before the ambitious plans for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics are allowed to proceed too far. Furthermore it is imperative that the assessment team understand and report on the perilous current state of the reactors, their surrounding buildings, the subterranean groundwater flow problems, and the multitudinous storage tanks on the surface filled with millions of gallons of contaminated water."

The full text of the letter is printed below and available in PDF. As I printed previously, the best way to address Fukushima as a safety threat to the Olympic Games will be when the "safe hands" include those of Japan, the IOC, and international scientific and engineering experts. It will be this concerned consortium that will assess and confirm that everything that can be done to mitigate the threat from Fukushima has been identified and that appropriate and timely action has been taken. That will be the most respected Gold Medal of the games.

Here is Dr. Caldicott's letter:
January 23, 2014

Dear Mr Bach:

I write to you as a physician and pediatrician who is well-versed in the medical effects of atomic radiation and the radioactive pollutants that have been released into the environment from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plants. (My CV can be found at helencaldicott.com)

I have a deep concern for the health and well-being of the athletes who have trained so hard and so long to be eligible to compete in the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

TEPCO has identified over 60 varieties of man-made radioactive pollutants from samples of contaminated water that are collected on a daily basis. Many of these pollutants -- for example, radioactive varieties of caesium (Cs-137), strontium (SR-90), and iodine (I-129) -- did not exist in the natural environment before the advent of nuclear fission. Thus the natural background levels of such radioactive pollutants is zero, yet once released into the environment they will remain potentially dangerous for centuries.

My concerns are listed below:

1. Parts of Tokyo itself are radioactively contaminated as a result of the fallout from the Fukushima Daiichi accident almost three years ago. Samples collected randomly from apartments, moss growing on roofs and soil from streets has been tested for various radioactive elements and has found to be very radioactive. References can be provided on request.
2. This means that the athletes will be subjected to inhaling or ingesting radioactive dust emitting alpha, beta and/or gamma radiation, as well as being exposed to gamma radiation (like X rays) emanating from contamination in the soil and on the streets.
3. Much of the food sold in Tokyo is contaminated with radioactive pollutants, having been grown in the Fukushima prefecture at the encouragement of the Japanese government. (It is impossible to taste or smell radioactive elements in food, and monitoring every item to be consumed is not practical.)
4. Many of the fish caught on the east coast of Japan carry some burden of radioactive elements, indeed some are quite severely contaminated. This is an ongoing problem; for almost three years 300 to 400 tons of radioactively contaminated groundwater has been pouring into the Pacific Ocean every day from beneath the damaged reactors.
5. If the athletes eat radioactively contaminated food or drink radioactively contaminated tea or other liquids, some of them are likely years later to develop cancer or leukemia. The incubation time for these diseases is five to eighty years depending on the particular radionuclides and the affected organs.
6. The Japanese government is incinerating radioactive waste and some of the resulting radioactive ashes are being dumped into Tokyo Bay where the athletes are expected to row and exercise.
7. Another major worry is that between now and 2020, additional releases of radioactive pollutants could occur from the Fukushima Daiichi reactors. The buildings of Units 3 and 4 are severely damaged from the original earthquake and subsequent explosions; they could well collapse if they suffer another earthquake greater than 7 on the Richter scale. Should that happen, up to 10 times more radioactive cesium than was released at Chernobyl could be released into the air. Such an event could greatly exacerbate existing contamination problems in Tokyo and pose great dangers to the athletes.
8. At the Fukushima Daiichi site, there are more than 1000 huge hastily built metal tanks holding millions of gallons of extremely radioactive water, with an additional 400 tons being pumped out from the damaged reactors on a daily basis. Some of these tanks were put together by inexperienced workers and they are held together with corroding bolts, rubber sealants, plastic pipes and duct tape. Another large earthquake would likely rupture many of these tanks thus releasing additional volumes of highly contaminated water into the Pacific Ocean just north of Tokyo.

It is for these reasons that I strongly recommend that you urge the International Olympic Committee to assemble an independent assessment team of biomedical experts, who have no financial or other relationship with the nuclear power industry or its regulators, to carry out a diligent investigation of all relevant areas to determine the extent of radiogenic health concerns before the ambitious plans for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics are allowed to proceed too far. Furthermore it is imperative that the assessment team understand and report on the perilous current state of the reactors, their surrounding buildings, the

subterranean groundwater flow problems, and the multitudinous storage tanks on the surface filled with millions of gallons of contaminated water.

Sincerely,

Helen Caldicott MBBS, FRACP

Hakodate suit against nearby plant

April 3, 2014

City files for injunction against nuclear plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140403_37.html

A city in northern Japan has filed for an injunction against the construction of a nuclear power plant in a nearby town.

Hakodate City on Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido filed a suit with the Tokyo District Court against the central government and the Tokyo-based plant operator J-Power on Thursday.

Hakodate is demanding that the defendants halt ongoing construction of the plant in Oma Town, Aomori Prefecture, about 23 kilometers south of the city across the Tsugaru Strait.

Construction was suspended in the wake of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in March 2011, but was resumed in October 2012.

J-Power plans to apply for safety checks required under the government's new safety guidelines as early as this fall. Hakodate City argues the safety of the plant cannot be secured under the new guidelines.

It said should an accident occur at the Oma nuclear plant, damage to the city would be so serious that it could no longer function.

The city noted that local governments within a 30-kilometer radius of a nuclear plant are required to evacuate residents in the event of a nuclear accident.

The city argued that the construction should be suspended until Hakodate, which is located within a 30-kilometer radius from the Oma plant, gives its consent.

The municipality would be the first in Japan to file against the building of a nuclear power plant.

Apr. 3, 2014 - Updated 10:07 UTC

Responses to Hakodate suit



http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140403_43.html

The Nuclear Regulation Authority said it won't comment on the suit as it hasn't read the content.

J-Power said it is regrettable that the city filed the suit, and that it will present its argument in court. The operator said it hopes to promote the construction plan by providing information to Hakodate City and taking steps to build a safe power plant.

Apr. 3, 2014 - Updated 10:08 UTC

Hokkaido city files lawsuit to stop nuclear plant construction in Aomori

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140403p2a00m0na014000c.html>

The Hakodate Municipal Government on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido filed a lawsuit on April 3 against the state and a utility firm to freeze construction of a nuclear power plant in neighboring Aomori Prefecture.

The lawsuit was filed with the Tokyo District Court. It is the first lawsuit by a local government seeking an injunction against a nuclear plant. The main focus of the lawsuit is on whether the court will grant the local municipality that does not host a nuclear power station but falls within a radius of 30 kilometers

from a planned nuclear plant the right to approve or disapprove a plan to build a nuclear power station in its vicinity.

Electric Power Development Co., known as J-Power, started building a nuclear power plant in Oma, Aomori Prefecture, in May 2008 after receiving government approval. But the construction work was suspended in the wake of the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011. Although the then government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) decided "not to build new nuclear power plants," it approved the resumption of the construction of the power station in October 2012 on the grounds that the facility that had already been under construction would not fall into the category of new nuclear power plants to be built.

The Hakodate Municipal Government argues that regulation standards used in approving the construction of the Oma plant have flaws in light of the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant and that the construction authorization is invalid accordingly. The local government also argues that no safety judgment under new regulation standards has been made for the Oma plant and therefore the Nuclear Regulation Authority should order a suspension of the construction of the nuclear facility. It also argues that the construction of the Oma plant should be suspended until the Hakodate Municipal Government agrees on the construction plan because municipalities within a radius of 30 kilometers from nuclear plants are required to draw up nuclear disaster prevention plans.

Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo visited the Tokyo District Court on the afternoon of April 3 to go through procedures for filing the lawsuit.

April 03, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Who is deceiving whom?

March 31, 2013

The Fukushima disaster: Three years on, who's fooling whom?

Journalists and academics tackle different sides of an a issue that's no laughing matter

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2014/03/31/issues/the-fukushima-disaster-three-years-on-whos-fooling-whom/#.Uz7KMVfi91s>

On April Fools' Day, writers offer their views on who has been deceived — and who has been behind the deception — surrounding the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 plant on March 11, 2011, and the ongoing related problems in the prefecture and beyond.

[The first article - by Eric Johnston - was already published on this blog under

<http://fukushima-is-still-news.over-blog.com/article-what-s-wrong-with-this-picture-123171598.html>]

Water isn't as viral as the memes

Fukushima and social media can be a toxic mix. Combine one with a poorly doctored photograph and you end up with a 160-foot-long squid, whose washed-up presence on a Santa Monica beach earlier this year quickly went viral.

The creature's enormous proportions were proof, apparently, that the feared "Fukushima plume" had not only arrived on the other side of the Pacific, but had turned coastal waters into a frothing cauldron of radioactivity.

The truth is less dramatic and — as has been the case with all issues related to Fukushima radiation over the past three years — far more complicated.

One thing is certain: In the next couple of months, water containing radioactive cesium from Fukushima will arrive on the west coast of North America, probably starting with Alaska and British Columbia, before making its way south over the coming years.

Exactly when, and at what levels of toxicity, is open to scientific debate, but the consensus is that even peak measurements will be well below levels considered a threat to human health.

Dr. John Smith of the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, which has been sampling waters along a line running 2,000 km due west of Vancouver, told the BBC that even the highest concentrations of cesium-137 measured so far were "still well below maximum permissible concentrations in drinking water in Canada . . . so it's clearly not an environmental or human-health radiological threat."

No cesium-134 has yet been detected, and cesium-137 is already present in the ocean as a result of the atomic bomb tests of the 1950s and '60s.

Yet reassurances from Smith and other serious scientists have not stemmed the flow of grim predictions for humanity from the Fukushima "plumesayers."

They have been aided by a striking graphic that lends the entire Pacific Ocean the appearance of a cesium-enriched psychedelic swamp.

In fact, the graphic is a map created by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration showing the height of waves created by the March 2011 tsunami.

Other outlandish claims include the warning that swimming off the California coast is akin to suicide by radiation exposure, and that 98 percent of the ocean floor in the same area is covered with dead sea creatures. To the list of victims of the Fukushima plume we can also add balding polar bears, bleeding herring and pathogenically infected starfish.

All of these myths have been expertly debunked, but it is in the nature of the Web that more freakish claims will follow when the plume finally makes it to the west coast of North America.

The Fukushima meltdown has created understandable concerns, in Japan and beyond, about health and the environment. But mutant cephalopods shouldn't be among them.

Justin McCurry is the Japan and Korea correspondent for the Guardian and Observer newspapers.

Tohoku is bigger than Fukushima

Allow me to state the obvious: The problems involving the reactors in Fukushima are serious. What is less obvious is that the problems facing the Tohoku region extend far beyond Fukushima.

The triple disaster that struck Japan in 2011 affected nine prefectures: Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima, Chiba, Nagano, Tochigi, Niigata and Ibaraki. Of these nine, six get little or no press coverage. Most likely this is because the scope of the damage was focused upon cities and towns in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures. Herein lies the first problem.

Quantifying damage inevitably leaves out key aspects of any disaster. Loss of life and property become numbers. Numbers turn into data. The higher these numbers, the more attention that school, city or region gets. On the scales of right and wrong, data is neither. It's what happens with this data that leads to hard feelings and misunderstandings.

For those living outside of Fukushima there is little joy in being featured in the same news article as one about nuclear problems.

When stories about Tohoku focus on Fukushima, those living in communities not affected by radiation feel readers will assume they, too, are in the same boat. This is also true for victims in Fukushima for whom radiation is not why they lost their homes. Reducing all of the Tohoku disaster to "the nuclear

problem” diminishes loss and pain. For those outside of Japan less familiar with geography, this lumping-the-disaster-region-into-one-bucket style of reporting leads to the misconception that all of Tohoku is now dangerous. We now have the second problem: The perception projected outward insinuates Tohoku equals Fukushima. If Fukushima is “bad” then Tohoku is “bad.” This is neither fair nor accurate.

Stories of the impending meltdown of reactor No. 3 hitting blogs and news outlets last December illustrate what many in Tohoku do not appreciate. Never mind the inaccuracies. One author said, “wash obsessively” to avoid the impending nuclear contamination and suggested readers stock up on Tyvek suits. This Chicken Little-style of reporting is not only irresponsible, it’s malicious. Here is the third problem: Radiation is scary, making it a juicy story that is easy to dramatize.

Tohoku is bigger than Fukushima. While the problems caused by the nuclear crisis indeed require focus and attention, so do the crises faced by those outside of Fukushima.

Amya L. Miller is Director of Global Public Relations for the city of Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture.

Problems can’t be paid forward

The Fukushima disaster had a precarious impact on the developing world in that people there had to rely on indirect sources for information.

News about the earthquake and its aftermath came via Western channels. Since the developing world has hardly any media presence in Japan, a large part of humankind was informed about the events through Western eyes — which were not always reliable.

As a result, countries depending on such news sources were initially fooled over the reality of the nuclear disaster as they were told about the horror approaching Tokyo. Some were panicked to the scale that their governments informed diplomats stationed in Tokyo to lock the doors of embassy facilities and flee the radiation-tainted country. Of course, once the “doomsday scenario” was debunked, the diplomats quietly returned to duty.

Three years later, many of the lessons from that time seem to have been forgotten. However, the disaster did shake up public opinion — in Tokyo and elsewhere — about the danger and uncertainty of nuclear-power generation in an unprecedented way. This awakening forced the government to take the bold step of shutting down existing nuclear reactors and, more importantly, announce that Japan will not build new nuclear power stations in the future. This signaled a radical shift in Japan’s energy policy, but the current administration has been vague on whether it would uphold it.

However, it's clear that some in the Japanese government consider nuclear power generation to be an unsafe option, even for an energy-hungry country like Japan. Many people, here and abroad, welcomed moves toward exposing the follies of nuclear-power generation. However, those who had hoped for an all-out abandonment of it probably overlooked business interests related to nuclear energy.

Japan has a vibrant nuclear power sector that has invested billions of yen producing essential components for power generation, including reactors. Companies that invested in that sector now face huge financial risk if Japan chooses to shun nuclear power, so they need an assurance that their work was not for nothing. Thus the government now plays the role of a nuclear salesman hitting up a huge tract of developing countries that are showing a growing appetite for energy.

Japan is aggressively selling the technology that many of its own citizens consider dangerous. Tokyo has already bid successfully in selling nuclear-power-generation capabilities to Turkey and Vietnam; and is trying hard to enter the fast-growing market of India. The hunger to reach an ever-growing target for economic growth has blinded policy makers in many of those countries. Now they'd go to any extent to generate power, an accident triggered by a natural disaster is no obstacle. As long as a lucrative offer from a government is on the table, why bother about the lessons of Fukushima?

Monzurul Huq is Tokyo bureau chief for Prothom Alo, Bangladesh's leading daily.

We may get fooled again

I was outside the country when 3/11 happened, returning a few months later to a Kansai that seemed largely unaffected by the nuclear crisis unfolding in the north. The local news was full of items that seemed surreal given the circumstances; plans to extend the Osaka monorail to a loop configuration by 2050, people in Kyoto whining about not getting a station on the mag-lev bullet train until 2045 and excited press releases about the pending commencement of service on the Hokuriku Shinkansen which, starting in 2015, will offer high-speed connections between a string of rural municipalities with shrinking populations.

So it seems to have been business as usual down here ever since the disaster. The surreal state of planning transportation infrastructure for a future in which many people wonder if there will be enough money to pay their pensions let alone fund high-tech people movers was already there. It has just been enhanced by the absence of debate over where the electricity to power them will come from or any public consideration of the possibility that these long-term infrastructure fantasies might be rendered moot if the Fukushima plant slips out of control again.

To see any impact of 3/11 beyond the predictable feel-good stories fed to/by the press, one has to talk to contacts in the community. That is where you meet and hear about people who have quietly moved to Kansai from Tokyo, or at least put their families here and commute to the “Big Mikan.”

After Fukushima, Kansai residents are likely more aware of the nearby Fukui nuclear cluster. It seems far away yet would be easy commuting distance if there was a bullet train connecting it to anything. But there isn't: according to Google maps it is safely isolated at the tip of the Tsuruga Peninsula, connected to the mainland by a single coastal road. While there has been more focus on disaster awareness and, of course, spending on concrete to “harden” Kansai for the next disaster, I can't recall seeing or hearing anything about what to do or where to go if Fukui melts down. Surely the government must have a plan. Though I suppose when faced with the competing demands of shinkansen, Abenomics and people wanting air conditioning in the summer, some blue-ribbon committee might decide “it will never happen here” is a good enough plan for now.

“We won't be fooled again” is a nice mantra. But it may not mean very much to people who just want to believe that everything is back to normal.

Colin P. A. Jones is a professor at Doshisha Law School in Kyoto.

The fish story that should be told

Last year, foreign reporters in Japan were approached by a producer making a series of documentaries for NHK about the Tohoku recovery. I proposed looking at the plight of fishermen along the Fukushima coast linked to the issue of contaminated water at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

Most of the fishermen have been out of work since March 2011, a tragedy anywhere but particularly in a country so synonymous with the sea. They can be found in ports like Soma most days, whiling away their time mending nets or turning over the engines of their boats.

The producer liked the idea but thought she'd never get it past her bosses. “They want uplifting stories,” she said. “Nothing too depressing.” The program went ahead late last year with a story about abandoned pets.

It's not that hard to understand why animals are better TV than despairing fishermen. Caring for feral dogs is, within the context of the Fukushima disaster, a small problem and the solution

uncomplicated: find a little bit of money and some loving owners. In contrast, the nuclear cleanup is just so vast.

The contaminated water problem is a case in point. Engineers have performed miracles keeping the fuel in the plant's three most damaged reactors cool. But nearly 440,000 tons of toxic water is now stored in on-site tanks as a byproduct.

"It's the issue that keeps me awake at night," Dale Klein, a former chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission who advises Tokyo Electric Power Co. told us last month.

The scientific consensus is building that the only place for that water to go is into the Pacific, once it has been decontaminated to acceptable levels. But science is bound to clash loudly with politics. Engineers won round one of this battle last month. Tepco has lobbied the fishermen for two years to allow the flushing of "uncontaminated groundwater." The alternative was that the toxic water would leak. So last month the fishermen, finally, reluctantly agreed.

The water problem is only one that must be solved — and paid for — before the fuel can be extracted — probably at the end of the decade. Billions of yen will then have to be found over the next 20 years to decommission the plant. Billions more are being scattered around Fukushima in a flawed attempt to lower radiation levels. Workers are in short supply. Refugees must be persuaded to return home if the region is to revive.

The TV producer's timidity may have been an anomaly but it's not like the industry doesn't have anything to prove. Television here shied away from probing the flaws of the nation's nuclear power strategy before March 11, 2011, pulled its punches during the Fukushima disaster and did its best to ignore the protests it triggered. Surely fishermen should be at the center of the story about recovery — downbeat or not.

David McNeill writes for The Chronicle of Higher Education and other international publications. His co-edited book about the 3/11 disaster, "Strong in the Rain," was released in 2012.

Send your comments and story ideas to community@japantimes.co.jp

Hakodate's suit - Not just any old nuclear plant

April 4, 2014

Hakodate files rare suit seeking halt to nuclear plant construction

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201404040046

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

In a first by a municipality, the city government of Hakodate, Hokkaido, filed a lawsuit April 3 against the central government and the Electric Power Development Co. (J-Power) to halt construction of the Oma nuclear power plant in nearby Aomori Prefecture.

"To protect the city and its residents, we have no choice but to take this legal action today," said Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo, who filed the suit with the Tokyo District Court.

It is the first lawsuit to be filed in which a local government is the plaintiff seeking an injunction against a nuclear plant.

Located on the coastline across the Tsugaru Strait, part of Hakodate falls within a 30-kilometer radius of the Oma nuclear plant. However, according to city officials, Hakodate has no say in approving construction at the plant.

"We want to make the appeal that it is unreasonable to impose such a risk on the city without allowing us the right to say that we approve or disapprove of construction," Kudo said.

J-Power's Oma plant is expected to become the world's first nuclear facility that fully relies on MOX fuel, a mixture of uranium and plutonium extracted from spent fuel.

Construction started in May 2008, but was suspended after the March 11, 2011, nuclear accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. Construction resumed at the Oma facility in October 2012.

Areas administered by the Hakodate city government fall within the central government's designated urgent protective action planning zone (UPZ), a 30-km radius of a nuclear plant. In the UPZ, local governments are required to establish emergency measures, such as evacuation plans.

"If a serious accident takes place at the Oma plant, it would be impossible to quickly evacuate the entire city of more than 270,000 residents," Hakodate city claimed in the lawsuit. "The whole city could possibly be destroyed."

In its lawsuit, the city said it has the right to defend the lives of its citizens and maintain a municipality responsible for supporting their livelihoods. The city also said municipalities within the 30-km radius of a nuclear plant should be granted the right to the assent procedure of its construction, pointing out that state approval of the Oma plant reactor construction was given in April 2008, before the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, triggered by the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

The lawsuit was unanimously approved by the city assembly in March.

Hiroyuki Kawai, a lead lawyer for the defense team, said, "The importance of a lawsuit filed by the mayor after being approved by the city assembly will be understood by the judges."

Construction is expected to continue after the latest legal action.

"We will patiently explain the significance of the project and the safety measures," a J-Power official said. "We want to politely provide information and explanations to the city of Hakodate."

The mayor of Oma, Aomori Prefecture, said he stands behind the construction of the MOX fuel facility.

"I won't comment on what another municipal government has decided," said Mayor Mitsuharu Kanazawa. "Oma's stance to promote nuclear power generation will not change. We will have to work together for that goal."

However, mayors of other municipalities that are located near nuclear power plants share similar concerns of Hakodate government officials.

Yoshikazu Tsukabe, the mayor of Imari, Saga Prefecture, said he supports Hakodate's action. All of Imari falls within the UPZ of Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Genkai nuclear power plant, and Imari also wants the right to have a say in plant construction.

"With legally binding conditions, utilities will come up with safety measures," Tsukabe said.

On March 28, heads of seven municipalities, including Fujieda and Fukuroi, in Shizuoka Prefecture near the Hamaoka nuclear power plant in Omaezaki, visited Chubu Electric Power Co., the operator of the plant, and requested that arrangements be made to hold talks on safety measures.

(This article was written by Kozue Isozaki, Gen Kaga, Kentaro Yamayoshi and Yasushi Okubo.)

April 3, 2014

Clearly mentions the MOX issue

Hakodate city files suit to suspend MOX reactor construction

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140403p2g00m0dm079000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- The city of Hakodate in Hokkaido filed a lawsuit Thursday against the state and Electric Power Development Co. seeking suspension of the construction of a plutonium-uranium mixed oxide fuel reactor due to safety concerns.

Hakodate, about 23 kilometers from the Oma plant located at the northernmost tip of Japan's main island of Honshu, filed the suit with the Tokyo District Court -- the first by a local government seeking suspension of a nuclear power plant.

The move is a sign that municipalities that could be seriously affected by a nuclear accident aim to have a greater say in safety matters, after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster led the central government to expand the areas around each nuclear power plant that should prepare for evacuation from a 10-kilometer radius to 30 km.

The so-called MOX fuel to be used at the plant is manufactured from uranium and plutonium extracted from reprocessing conventional uranium fuel.

Japan has experience of operating reactors loading MOX fuel in one-third of their cores, but there is no example in or outside the country of a reactor operating completely on MOX fuel.

In the suit, the city said the safety of the Oma plant cannot be guaranteed even though the country has revamped its nuclear regulations since the Fukushima disaster.

Electric Power Development, an electricity wholesaler commonly known as J-Power, said in March it will apply for the state safety assessment of the Oma plant as early as this fall so that it can commence operation.

The state approved construction of the Oma plant in 2008. But after about 40 percent of the construction had been completed, work was suspended in the wake of devastating accident at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, which was hit by a huge earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

J-Power, however, resumed construction work in October 2012.

Against Govt's "sloppy (energy) policy"

April 12, 2014

Pro-nuclear energy policy angers residents hit by Fukushima disaster

Residents and citizens groups protest against the government's basic energy plan in front of the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo's Nagatacho district, on April 11. (Mainichi)

拡大写真

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140412p2a00m0na013000c.html>

The government's decision to support the use of nuclear power under a new national energy policy has angered residents concerned about continuing radiation damage from the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The Abe Cabinet named nuclear power as an "important base-load power source" under the Basic Energy Plan it approved on April 11. Residents living in the aftermath of the disaster say the government has forgotten about them, and have slammed the policy.

"It's a sloppy policy that shows how the government thinks restarting nuclear plants will fix everything," said 63-year-old Hiromitsu Kobayashi, secretary-general of a citizens group in Abiko, Chiba Prefecture.

He says nuclear plants cannot be controlled when they are broken. "I don't want the government to reactivate nuclear plants," he stressed.

Kobayashi lives near a public interim storage facility for ashes from the incineration of radiation-tainted waste. Over 520 tons of contaminated ashes that have been delivered to the city -- despite opposition from residents -- will remain there until the end of March 2015, when the interim storage period ends.

A total of 104 municipalities have registered radiation dosages over 0.23 microsieverts per hour and sought government-supported decontamination. The municipalities are spread out over the eight prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima, Ibaraki, Tochigi, Gunma, Saitama and Chiba.

Fumio Iwamoto, 72, a shiitake mushroom farmer in Kanuma, Tochigi Prefecture, has been banned from shipping his products, though Kanuma is over 100 kilometers away from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

"The plant disaster has ruined my life," he lamented.

Iwamoto bought special logs from the Shikoku region last year to grow his mushrooms and has restarted shiitake farming, but customers have been buying elsewhere. There is no guarantee that his products will reach consumers at all.

"Considering the level of damage a nuclear plant can do to farmers like us, its operational cost is not cheap," Iwamoto said.

Hideko Nara, 49, a mother of three boys in Gunma Prefecture city of Numata, bought a stack of books about radiation in the wake of the plant disaster. She was concerned about its effect on her children's health. When she approached local elementary and junior high schools, asking them to decontaminate the school grounds, officials told her that doing so would spark harmful rumors. At that moment, she realized that the nuclear accident had divided the local community.

"I don't understand why the government is pushing to restart nuclear power plants when the cause of the Fukushima disaster has not been clarified," said Nara angrily.

April 12, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Nukes no alternative to fossil fuels

Fighting Our Fossil-Nuke Extinction

Posted on Apr 8, 2014

By Harvey Wasserman

http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/fighting_our_fossil-nuke_extinction_20140408



Shutterstock

The 25th anniversary of the Exxon Valdez disaster has brought critical new evidence that petro-pollution is destroying our global ecosystem.

The third anniversary of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown in Japan confirms that radioactive reactor fallout is doing the same.

How the two mega-poisons interact remains largely unstudied, but the answers can't be good. And it's clearer than ever that we won't survive without ridding our planet of both.

To oppose atomic power with fossil fuels is to treat cancer by burning down the house.

To oppose petro-pollution with nukes is to stoke that fire with radiation.

In September, the first round of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's latest report confirmed yet again that global warming is accelerating and that human activity is the cause.

On March 31, it reported on additional ecological impacts ranging from compromised food systems to harm done a wide range of critical living networks.

The core problem is “global weirding,” an escalating, unpredictable ecological instability. “A breakdown of food systems,” the loss of low-lying cities, ocean acidification, the death of coral reefs, the decline of critical land-based flora and fauna, and the decimation of critical ecosystems are all part of an increasingly poisonous package. The idea that somehow more CO₂ will yield more crops is counteracted by the toll taken by temperature spikes and the loss of certain insects, combined with the increased predations of others—and much more we simply do not understand.

There are always dissenters. But at Prince William Sound in Alaska we see the consensus on warming joined by yet another global terror: petro-poisoning.

A quarter-century after the 1979 Valdez disaster, Exxon and its allies are sticking with their “see no evil, pay no damages” denials.

But the hard evidence shows a wide range of local sea life has failed to return. Residual oil is still globbed along the shoreline.

And, in what NPR has called a “Eureka moment,” scientists have confirmed that the “long-lasting components of oil thought to be benign turned out to cause chronic damage to fish hearts when fish were exposed to tiny concentrations of the compounds as embryos.”

The impact is confirmed by parallel heart problems reported by Bloomberg to tuna harmed in the Gulf of Mexico’s far more recent 2010 BP disaster.

If the petro-toxics from these spills can do such damage to larger fish, what are they also doing to all others that occupy this ecosystem? If trace poisons spewed 25 years ago are still ripping through the embryo of Alaskan fish, what must they also be doing to the starfish, the krill, the phytoplankton, the algae and so many other microorganisms?

It’s long been known that the particulate matter from burning coal over the centuries has killed countless humans.

But what, in turn, is all that doing to the global ecosystem and all its even more vulnerable creatures, warmed or otherwise?

Since the Valdez’s 25th anniversary last month, two more major spills have poisoned the waters off Galveston, Texas, and Michigan. As Greg Palast has reported at Truthdig, our single certainty is that in a

world dominated by no-fault corporations, the fossil industry will pour ever-more lethal poisons into our air and water, land and crops, and all else on which we depend.

The same is true of atomic energy. A new scientific report about Chernobyl warns that in at least some of the forests saturated with radiation leaked from that nuclear plant, the natural cycle of decay has all but ceased.

Like cancer cells that refuse to die, the fallen vegetation won't go away. "Decomposers—organisms such as microbes, fungi and some types of insects that drive the process of decay—have also suffered from the contamination," Rachel Nuwer writes on Smithsonian.com. "These creatures are responsible for an essential component of any ecosystem: recycling organic matter back into the soil."

Sooner or later, that massive pile of inert detritus will catch fire. Gargantuan quantities of accumulated fallout will pour into the atmosphere. Those clouds will circle the globe. They'll merge with all those other isotopes blown into the sky from Chernobyl for the past 28 years, and from all the other reactors and A-bomb tests dating back to New Mexico, 1945.

Meanwhile, Fukushima continues to pour 300 tons or more of radioactive effluent into the Pacific every day. The first of its cesium isotopes have been found off Alaska and will come to California this summer.

But the harm precedes the actual arrival. All 15 tuna taken in one recent study off the California coast tested positive for Fukushima contamination.

The eerie disintegration of starfish along the West Coast may have been caused by petro-pollution rather than Fukushima's radiation. But each is clearly capable of doing the job alone.

Reports of a "dead zone" in the Pacific and of an epic disappearance of other marine life should be terrifying enough to make us act on both.

Burning coal and fracking gas release significant quantities of deadly radiation, as well as other pollutants and the matter at the root of climate change. Nuclear power heats our oceans and atmosphere, while spewing out still more eco-lethal doses of atomic emitters.

This is where tragedy and farce merge and mutate.

Our choice is not between nuclear power and fossil fuels. Either is sufficient to kill us outright or strand us alone on a dead planet.

Those who would work for human survival should long ago have embraced the truth that all living beings are interdependent, and so are the dirty corporate technologies that kill them.

We can no more survive on a planet burned and poisoned by fossil fuels than we can on one mutated and heated by atomic energy.

Time is short and the two movements must make their peace.

We have the means. Now we need the will.

Hosokawa and Koizumi join forces against nukes

April 15, 2014

Ex-premiers Koizumi, Hosokawa to establish antinuclear power forum

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140415p2g00m0dm056000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Former prime ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Morihiro Hosokawa will establish an antinuclear power forum in May to promote research into renewable power sources and support antinuclear candidates in elections, sources familiar with the matter said Tuesday.

The inauguration meeting will be held May 7, according to the sources.

Hosokawa, who was in power between August 1993 and April 1994, ran in the Tokyo gubernatorial election earlier this year with support from Koizumi on an antinuclear platform, but lost to Yoichi Masuzoe. Koizumi served as prime minister between April 2001 and September 2006.

The two are mulling supporting antinuclear candidates in the gubernatorial election this fall in Fukushima Prefecture, the home of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, and next spring's nationwide local elections, the sources said.

Among other founders of the forum are philosopher Takeshi Umehara and Kabuki actor Ichikawa Ennosuke, they said.

Koizumi, Hosokawa team up again to start anti-nuclear body

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201404150059

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Undeterred by a crushing election defeat, former Prime Ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Morihiro Hosokawa plan to set up an organization to abolish nuclear power and oppose Japan's exports of nuclear technology.

Koizumi, 72, and Hosokawa, 76, are expected to hold a convention in Tokyo on May 7 to inaugurate their anti-nuclear general incorporated association, a nonprofit entity.

The group will promote renewable energy technologies, oppose the restarts of idled nuclear reactors and field candidates against pro-nuclear politicians in local elections.

The two former prime ministers plan to hold town meetings in prefectures that host nuclear complexes, such as Niigata, Aomori and Kagoshima, to bolster anti-nuclear momentum in those areas.

"I want to support efforts to build the local economy without reliance on nuclear power," Hosokawa said in an interview with The Asahi Shimbun on April 14.

Just two months ago, on Feb. 9, Hosokawa could only place third in the Tokyo governor's election, even with the full support of the still-popular Koizumi. Under a campaign based largely on anti-nuclear policies, Hosokawa garnered less than half of the votes of the winner, Yoichi Masuzoe, who was supported by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his LDP seek a return to Japan's energy policy before the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant by defining nuclear power as an important energy source in the basic energy plan approved by the Cabinet on April 11.

The LDP is not particularly worried about the latest move of Koizumi and Hosokawa to take the anti-nuclear cause beyond Tokyo.

“They no longer have any clout to significantly sway public opinion,” said a senior LDP official, citing the long period from when the two led the country.

Hosokawa served as prime minister from 1993 to 1994 and Koizumi from 2001 and 2006. After the loss in the Tokyo election, Hosokawa and Koizumi met several times and agreed on the need to start a movement to give a voice to the public’s anti-nuclear sentiment, which they believe remains strong.

Eleven others at this stage plan to promote the new group, including philosopher Takeshi Umehara and Kabuki actor Ichikawa Ennosuke, according to Hosokawa. Veteran actress Sayuri Yoshinaga will be among dozens of the body’s supporters.

Hosokawa will be the representative director of the group, whose name is translated as “the conference for promoting renewables.”

The group’s initial challenges will be to block the restart of the Sendai nuclear power plant in Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, and to prevent pro-nuclear candidates from winning the Fukushima governor race late this year and the nationwide local elections in spring 2015.

Of Japan’s 48 idled reactors, two at Kyushu Electric Power Co.’s Sendai plant are expected to be the first to go back online, possibly in the summer. The Nuclear Regulation Authority’s safety screenings have progressed furthest at the plant.

But local governments around the nuclear plant must also clear many hurdles to secure the safety of their residents. For example, they need to draw up realistic evacuation plans for a possible emergency as well as measures to deal with ash from Mount Sakurajima and other volcanoes.

Hosokawa and Koizumi are expected to hold a town meeting in the region to stimulate debate over the matter.

In the Fukushima gubernatorial election, the LDP’s prefectural chapter is expected to field a candidate.

To counter, Hosokawa and Koizumi plan to back a contender of their choice or endorse a candidate running on promises to phase out nuclear power, according to people close to Hosokawa.

They also plan to raise the issue of whether the Fukushima No. 2 nuclear power plant, located near the stricken No. 1 plant and also operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co., should be decommissioned, as was requested by local governments in the prefecture.

Koizumi handpicked Abe for his first stint as prime minister in 2006. Now in his second run as the nation's leader, Abe has not taken a clear stance on the future of the No. 2 nuclear plant.

See also :

Former PMs to launch group for renewable energy

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140415_29.html

Former Japanese prime ministers Morihiro Hosokawa and Junichiro Koizumi are moving to launch an organization toward ending Japan's reliance on nuclear power.[...]

Check 281 Antinuke

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/culture/2013/10/an-interview-with-281-anti-nuke.html>
October 1, 2013



An Interview with 281_Anti Nuke

Posted by Roland Kelts

The stickers went up a few months after Japan's triple disaster in 2011—an earthquake and tsunami that took twenty thousand lives, and an ongoing nuclear crisis that threatens more. They first appeared along the shabby backstreets of Shibuya, in downtown Tokyo, a place that offers some of the very few canvasses for graffiti in a city not given to celebrating street art. The British expat photographer and filmmaker Adrian Storey couldn't ignore them. "Being a foreigner, there was a sort of brief period after 3/11 when there was this sense of community in Tokyo that I haven't felt before," Storey says. "Then it kind of went away, and people just went back to shopping. I was drawn to the stickers because I realized it was a Japanese person behind them, and they actually cared about what was happening. I started photographing every sticker I found."

Some stickers are small, eight inches or so in height. Others are the size of a stunted adult or a large child. In fact, children are featured in many of them, especially the motif of a young girl in a raincoat above the caption "I hate rain," with the trefoil symbol for radiation stamped between "hate" and "rain." On other stickers, silhouettes of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are suspended in white space beside the logo for the Tokyo Electric Power Company, the government-allied conglomerate responsible for the operation and maintenance of the severely damaged Fukushima nuclear power plants. Sometimes the stark black lines and blotches resemble Rorschach tests.

You look and see nothing, then look again and see Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's face, his mouth suffocated by an American flag.

The artist behind them calls himself 281_Anti Nuke, and he has become a cult phenomenon among Tokyo locals. The numerals refer to an athletic jersey he wore in high school. "It's just nostalgia," he says. "Memories of my happier times." Tagged as the "Japanese Banksy," he is an unlikely manifestation of Japan's shredded identity: a contemporary artist of dissent in a country that rarely tolerates protest and barely supports modern art. His real name is Kenta Matsuyama, though few Japanese know that, since it appears only in the fine print on his manager's English-language Web site. He is a fortysomething father born and raised near Fukushima, the site of Japan's most pressing nuclear disaster. We meet in the heart of Shibuya, in a second-story café overlooking the most famous intersection in Japan—a crowded network of diagonal crosswalks that is featured in nearly every film set in Tokyo.

We are hiding in plain sight. "These people," he says, gesturing toward the window and the masses below, "they only vote for the winner; they only think about the winner. They have no concept of real strength. They feel satisfied just knowing that the party they voted for won." (That party, the archconservative, U.S.-friendly, and pro-nuclear Liberal Democratic Party, crows about a mandate after sweeping recent elections.) He is wearing a tight-fitting gray hoodie, pitch-black jeans and sunglasses, and a white surgical mask. It's not always easy to hear him through the mask, so he tugs it down a bit when his speech quickens in anger. "Maybe it's true that there's no political party you can count on, but it's more than that. It's fear. It's Japanese people never doubting their leaders. Looking out at Shibuya, I'm sure that nobody

out there remembers the idea of radiation anymore. People abroad know more about the crisis in Fukushima than the Japanese. The Japanese are trying to forget. I want to make them remember.”

Anti Nuke is an active Twitter user, but when he first started posting his art, he received death threats so virulent that last year he temporarily took down his Twitter and Facebook accounts and started hiding all of his personal information. Even now, his Web site is often hacked. In public, when he is not cloaked by hoodie, sunglasses, and mask, he wears a full-body hazmat suit. As for his method: “Stickers are better than graffiti,” he says, “because they are faster to apply. You just stick them on and run off. And I use very simple English to be direct, without nuances. Like, ‘I hate rain.’ In Japanese, it’s ‘*Watashi wa ame ga kirai.*’ So in Japanese, you really need to talk about who hates rain, and why, and in what context. But in English it’s more iconic. There’s more room for the imagination, and that’s powerful.”

281_Anti Nuke’s work is about to reach more people via exhibitions in the New York and Los Angeles, and a documentary film about his art directed by Storey will début in festivals next year. “His mission is personal,” says Storey. “He wants people to think about the same things he’s thinking about, but, like he said to me many times, it’s about the future of his children. It’s the future of everybody’s children in Japan. He doesn’t want to make a name for himself.”

Perhaps. But donning hoodies, shades, and surgical masks, not to mention the occasional hazmat suit, is an odd strategy for anonymity. “It’s fine if I become famous if it helps communicate this huge problem,” Anti Nuke concedes. “There are bigger problems in Fukushima than we know now. I’m sure of that. I’ve communicated with people there. I have family there. The Japanese government will not save them, and since the survivors cannot escape, Fukushima people hate Tokyo people for the electricity they use and cannot conserve.”

He insists that he is not anti-American, just pro-truth. “I love the American people, but I want them to help save Japan. This time, it’s the Japanese people who are to blame. We’re not aware, and we are actively trying to forget. We need foreigners to save us from ourselves.”



Roland Kelts is the author of "Japanamerica: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the United States." He divides his time between New York and Tokyo.

Art by 281_Anti Nuke, courtesy of Roth Management. Photograph by Bellamy Hunt, courtesy of Roth Management.

So it IS possible

April 28, 2014

Taiwan halts construction of fourth nuclear plant after protests

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/04/28/asia-pacific/taiwan-halts-construction-of-fourth-nuclear-plant-after-protests/#.U16CHlf91s>

Kyodo, Bloomberg, AFP-JIJI

TAIPEI – Taiwanese Premier Jiang Yi-huah announced Monday the suspension of construction of the island's controversial fourth nuclear power station, pending a public referendum on whether to resume work.

An estimated 28,500 anti-nuclear demonstrators blockaded one of Taipei's busiest streets Sunday, forcing the ruling Kuomintang party to yield and halt construction work at the nearly completed plant.

Jiang defended the government's decision to stop work but not to scrap the 283.8 billion New Taiwan dollar (\$9.4 billion) project.

"By suspending the construction, we hope the public will have time to think and discuss the issue before they determine at the ballot box," Jiang told a news conference.

"In this way, we would leave an option open to our next generation when choosing energy (sources)," he said.

Jiang said Taiwan cannot afford another shock similar to 2000 when the then-government of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) announced it was scrapping the plant.

That announcement plunged politics and the stock market into chaos for months. The Supreme Court later ruled against the government decision.

Sunday's concession prompted many demonstrators to leave but hundreds remained, causing police to use water cannon to disperse them Monday morning.

Claiming they were attacked, club-waving riot police chased some protesters. Police also carried away some sit-in demonstrators lying on the ground.

More than 40 people were slightly injured in the clashes, the government said.

If completed, the new power station 40 km (25 miles) from Taipei will be the island's fourth nuclear plant. Opponents say it would be unsafe in an earthquake-prone island.

The plant has two reactors, one of which is 98 percent complete.

Protest organizers said they will keep watching to see if the government fulfills its promises.

Concerns about the safety of nuclear power flared up again in the wake of the March 11, 2011, Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Like Japan, Taiwan is regularly hit by earthquakes.

In September 1999 a 7.6-magnitude quake killed around 2,400 people in the island's deadliest natural disaster in recent history.

Taiwan's three existing nuclear power plants supply about 20 percent of the nation's electricity.

Planning 100th demonstration

May 2, 2014

Anti-nuke activists plan 100th rally near Diet

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/05/02/national/anti-nuke-activists-plan-100th-rally-near-diet/#.U2P3pleFEud>

Kyodo

Activists who have been rallying against nuclear power near the prime minister's office and the Diet building since 2012 are scheduled **to hold their 100th demonstration Friday night.**

The number of people attending the rallies, however, has declined to several thousand after peaking at some 200,000.

Misao Redwolf, an illustrator and one of the rally organizers, said she will continue to hold the rally every Friday night. "It's important to raise voices against nuclear power," she said. "We will continue protesting because we have no reason to quit."

Redwolf, who won't reveal her real name or age, is a member of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a group of antinuclear power activists in and around Tokyo. The activists held the first rally in March 2012, a year after the Fukushima disaster began on March 11, 2011, after the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami.

Some 300 people joined the first rally, which was held to oppose the restarting of reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant in the town of Oi, Fukui Prefecture, on the Sea of Japan coast.

Redwolf, who hails from the atom-bombed city of Hiroshima and started antinuclear activities around 2007, said she has always given thought to getting those not interested in antinuclear movement more involved.

Some 200,000 people attended the rally on June 29, 2012, opposing the restart of the No. 3 reactor at the four-reactor Oi power plant run by Kansai Electric Power Co.

But the pro-nuclear Liberal Democratic Party returned to power after the December 2012 Lower House election, ousting the Democratic Party of Japan from power. In April, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government adopted a new basic energy policy that calls for restarting the reactors and maintaining atomic energy.

The protesters have fallen to between 1,500 and 3,000 since.

Redwolf says she is not disappointed with the decline in numbers and said she weathered tougher times before the Fukushima disaster.

Redwolf said that, at present, she is particularly worried about restarting the reactors at the Sendai plant in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture.

100th anti-nuke demonstration in Tokyo since March 29, 2012

May 4, 2014

100th anti-nuclear protest held in Tokyo, but with far fewer people

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201405040013

By SATORU OGAWA/ Staff Writer

Anti-nuclear demonstrators held their 100th rally in Tokyo on May 2 amid concerns over the dwindling number of participants at the Friday night fixture in front of the prime minister's office.

The citizens groups behind the protests wonder how they can mobilize the "silent majority" to sustain the movement. However, some say the shrinking attendance has strengthened participants' spirit and sense of commitment to protect the "beacon of hope."

At 6 p.m. before sunset on May 2, people hoisting banners calling for nuclear-free Japan stood in neat rows along the sidewalk leading to the prime minister's office in Chiyoda Ward. They started chanting "we oppose nuclear resumption."

Organized by the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, the demonstration targeted moves to restart two reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture. The Nuclear Regulation Authority is in the final stage of safety screenings at the plant, operated by Kyushu Electric Power Co.

Keiko Kato, a 68-year-old translator from Kawasaki, raised a handwritten sign that read: "No nukes: Don't make us say this 100 times!"

It was her 93rd Friday night protest.

"I will attend this protest until all reactors become decommissioned so that we won't hand over this ill legacy to future generations," Kato said.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, which comprises 11 citizens groups and individual supporters, said about 3,000 people participated in the 100th protest, three times more than the average draw.

The first Friday night demonstration was held on March 29, 2012, a year after the Fukushima nuclear disaster unfolded.

It soon became a weekly event in front of the prime minister's office because the location and demonstration hours were convenient for those who work during the daytime and homemakers. In its heyday in June 2012, the rally drew as many as 200,000 people on one night.

Saiko Yokozeki, a 44-year-old high school teacher from Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward, participated in the May 2 rally with her three children. The family has joined in the event around 10 times over the past two years, and Yokozeki has noticed that the number of participants is shrinking.

"We are becoming desensitized to and less and less interested in the reality of Fukushima, although the plant is still emitting radiation-contaminated water every day," she said. "Someone must keep standing here to raise voices of opposition (to nuclear power)."

Norimichi Hattori, a 38-year-old corporate worker from Tokyo's Edogawa Ward, said he has regularly attended the rally since its early days to remind himself to never forget about Fukushima.

"In fact, the protest still attracts first-time participants," he said.

The rallies in the center of the nation's capital have spurred similar movements across Japan. More than 40 citizens groups nationwide stage Friday night protests in their hometowns.

Tetsu Iwai, a 67-year-old leader of an anti-nuclear group in Kagoshima that has held Friday demonstrations against the resumption of the Sendai plant, said the Tokyo rallies have served as a morale booster for movements across Japan.

"The people who are holding on in Tokyo have sent us a lot of emotional support," Iwai said.

Eiji Oguma, a professor of historical sociology at Keio University who has participated in the Tokyo rallies, said it is critically important for the protest in this form to continue because "it can visualize public opinion and serve as a flag to lead the people."

"Because there is much public support for the abolishment of nuclear power, movements such as this can eventually affect the course of the country," he said.

Popular writer Kaoru Takamura attributed the declining numbers at the Tokyo protests to the pro-nuclear government's policy of preventing the nuclear issue from becoming a focal point of national debate.

"Politicians have tried to prevent national debate on the nuclear issue and the problem surrounding nuclear energy from surfacing. It is against this background that people's urgent sense of alarm over nuclear power is clouded by their busy daily lives," Takamura said.

“It could simply be arrogance if politicians assume that the declining number of protesters signals a diminishing sense of rejection of nuclear power among the general public.”

Anti-nuke crusade

May 8, 2014

Koizumi, Hosokawa to stay out of politics in anti-nuclear crusade

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201405080047

By IZUMI SAKURAI/ Staff Writer

Former prime ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Morihiro Hosokawa have officially established an organization to abolish atomic power, but say they will avoid being directly involved in politics. With gubernatorial elections later this year certain to focus on the nuclear energy issue, however, it might prove difficult for the team not to campaign for anti-nuclear candidates.

“Japan is an earthquake-prone country, and the government has not taken effective measures to protect nuclear power plants from terrorism,” Koizumi said in front of more than 300 people during the inauguration ceremony of the Japan Assembly for Nuclear Free Renewable Energy in Tokyo on May 7.

Koizumi, 72, added that it is a “blatant lie” that nuclear power is safe, cost-effective and clean energy. Citing the crushing defeat of Hosokawa, 76, in the Tokyo gubernatorial election in February, Koizumi said, “We lost a battle but are standing up with an unyielding spirit to create a nuclear-free country.”

Hosokawa, who serves as the representative of the nonprofit, general incorporated association, said 60 percent of Japanese oppose bringing reactors back online and 80 percent support the eventual abolishment of nuclear power.

“It is utterly wrong for the current government to push for the restart of nuclear power plants. It contradicts Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s promise that his government will lower the country’s dependence on nuclear energy,” Hosokawa said.

“We must turn to renewable energy to create a society without fear of radiation contamination.”

The co-founders of the organization include philosopher Takeshi Umehara, writer Jakucho Setouchi, scholar Donald Keene and Katsunobu Sakurai, mayor of Minami-Soma, Fukushima Prefecture.

About 30 influential people, including celebrities such as actress Sayuri Yoshinaga and Kabuki actor Ichikawa Ennosuke, also listed their names as official supporters.

During the symposium on the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony, Reiko Yukawa, a music critic and one of the co-founders of the organization, proposed that the group commit itself to supporting candidates who oppose nuclear power in the Fukushima Prefecture gubernatorial election in November and other local elections. The nuclear issue is also likely to be contested in the July race for Shiga Prefecture's governorship.

After the talk, however, Koizumi told reporters that he is wary to get involved, saying "Elections can cause power struggles and friction" within the group.

Hosokawa agreed, saying that the aim of the group is to create a national-level movement to abolish nuclear power.

The organizers said that the group's first commitment will be organizing events to screen anti-nuclear films and small-scale discussion meetings for residents living close to nuclear power plants.

May 7, 2014

Ex-leaders revive no-nukes crusade

by Ayako Mie

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/05/07/national/politics-diplomacy/ex-leaders-revive-nukes-crusade/#.U2pSdVfi91s>

Three months after his defeat in the Tokyo gubernatorial race, former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa has teamed up once again with fellow ex-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to renew their effort to abolish nuclear power, even as the central government takes steps to revive it.

On Wednesday, the pair, joined by prominent scholars and activists, launched a council against nuclear power called Japan Assembly for Nuclear Free Renewable Energy.

“The Japanese people have a spirit sturdy enough to overcome even the most adversarial situations,” Koizumi said at the launch. “It’s a wonderful idea to create a country that relies on renewable energy and I am confident that we can make a better society.”

Donald Keene, an American-born scholar of Japanese literature who obtained Japanese citizenship a year after the March 11 disasters, is among the founders.

In February, the two retired prime ministers joined forces to steer the central government away from nuclear power generation, via Tokyo’s gubernatorial election.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government is the third-largest shareholder of Tokyo Electric Power Co., which operates the Fukushima No. 1 and No. 2 nuclear power plants as well as the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa complex, which is currently undergoing inspection by the Nuclear Regulation Authority for reactivation.

But the pair’s anti-nuclear platform in the race wasn’t enough to prevent former health and welfare minister Yoichi Masuzoe from winning. Masuzoe had the backing of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition ally, New Komeito.

There has been wide speculation that Hosokawa and Koizumi will attempt to influence regional elections by putting up or endorsing anti-nuclear candidates.

Fukushima Prefecture, which hosts the crippled No. 1 nuclear power plant, will elect a new governor in October, for instance. In Shiga Prefecture, Gov. Yukiko Kada, who has just announced she will not seek re-election in July, signed an agreement last year with plant operators in neighboring Fukui Prefecture, home to 15 nuclear reactors, requiring the operators gain public approval to build any new atomic power plants.

But Hosokawa and Koizumi said they would stay away from politics, whether on the local or national stage, and denied they would even support any anti-nuclear candidates in political campaigns.

“We are pushing for a national campaign for the zero nuclear option,” Hosokawa said after the launch event. “We do not wish to become involved in any political activities.”

Even if they were to involve themselves in any such elections, it remains to be seen how much sway the Koizumi-Hosokawa alliance would have. Governors cannot veto a decision to bring a reactor back online, for instance. What governors do have the power to do, however, is withhold permission to build a nuclear power plant on a new site.

Last month, the Abe government authorized a new Basic Energy Plan that specifies the importance of nuclear energy as a long-term source of electricity. It was a complete reversal of the pledge to phase out atomic power made by the Democratic Party of Japan government in power at the time of the Fukushima meltdowns.

Under the new plan, reactors taken offline after the Fukushima No. 1 disaster will be restarted following safety inspections by the NRA, and the possibility of building new plants has not been ruled out. Abe hopes to see the Kawauchi nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture restarted this summer.

Anti-nuke Godzilla?

May 10, 2014

New Hollywood remake of 'Godzilla' questions nuclear power

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201405100027



A general view of atmosphere seen at Warner Bros. Pictures and Legendary Pictures Present the Los Angeles Premiere of "Godzilla" at Dolby Theater on May 8 in Hollywood (AP Photo)

By ARI HIRAYAMA/ Correspondent

LOS ANGELES--The latest Hollywood remake of "Godzilla" debuted in Los Angeles on May 8, once again bringing an anti-nuclear message to the silver screen as the original film did in 1954.

The monster flick begins with a catastrophic accident at a nuclear power plant in Japan, caused by a major earthquake--an apparent reference to the Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011.

British director Gareth Edwards, who shot the film as the Fukushima crisis unfurled, said, "Our film is not about Fukushima, but it hopefully raises some questions that I feel about this power."

Japanese actor Ken Watanabe, who plays a scientist in the film, said he was concerned about how people affected by the Fukushima disaster would react to the film, which presents scenes of a catastrophic collapse of a nuclear plant.

"But I realized that I must take the challenge as a Japanese actor," Watanabe said.

The movie is the first 3-D Godzilla film, featuring a computer-generated 108-meter tall monster that terrorizes cities.

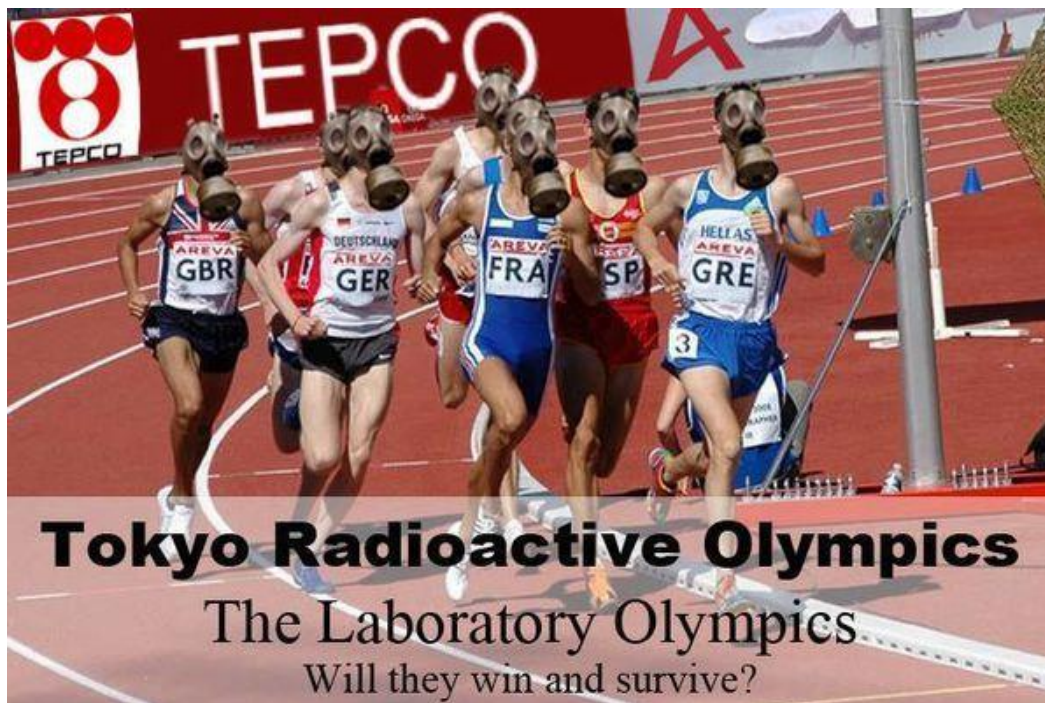
While Godzilla in the 1998 Hollywood remake looked more like a giant lizard, the latest design keeps true to the original film franchise, which produced 28 titles in Japan.

The first Godzilla film was inspired by the exposure of a Japanese tuna fishing boat, the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, to radiation from a U.S. nuclear weapons test on the Bikini Atoll in 1954.

The film will hit theaters in 63 countries and regions from mid-May and in Japan on July 25.

By ARI HIRAYAMA/ Correspondent

Tokyo radioactive Olympics



Impact of Oishinbo manga

May 12, 2014



‘Gourmet’ comic stokes Fukushima ire

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/05/12/national/gourmet-comic-stokes-fukushima-ire/#.U3DX1Sji91s>

by Reiji Yoshida
Staff Writer

The popular manga series “Oishinbo” came under fire again Monday after a character based on a real-life former mayor refers to Fukushima Prefecture in its latest issue as unlivable because of the radiation leaking from the ruined power plant there.

The Fukushima Prefectural Government fired back at the publisher the same day, saying no health problems have been reported as a result of the release of radioactive materials from the Fukushima No. 1 plant.

In a separate statement, the Osaka Prefectural Government took issue with the assertion, expressed by a character based on real-life medical expert Eisuke Matsui, that about 800 people living around an incinerator there have been affected by burning tsunami debris tainted with radiation from Tohoku.

The character based on real-life Futaba ex-Mayor Katsutaka Idogawa at one point says in Monday's installment: "You can no longer live in Fukushima." Futaba is one of the two towns that host the Fukushima plant.

"Oishinbo," which translates as "Gourmets" and usually deals with food and drink, caused a stir last week when a previous installment suggested many residents of the prefecture got nosebleeds caused by radioactive fallout from the plant.

In a written statement, the Fukushima Prefectural Government said no health problems in the prefecture have been linked to leaked radiation and that the manga would only serve to fan unfounded fears both at home and abroad.

Authorities also expressed concern that the series' depictions would damage its agricultural, fisheries and tourism industries.

Similarly, the Osaka Prefectural Government claimed that no local doctors or authorities have received reports of ill health due to debris incinerated in the city's Maishima area, contradicting the assertion made by the manga's character Matsui.

The incinerator has burned about 15,300 tons of tsunami debris from Iwate Prefecture. At every stage of the disposal, the radiation level was stable and low enough to be safe, the government said.

"We definitely cannot tolerate (the descriptions). It's extremely regrettable," the Fukushima government said in the statement, urging the publisher to consult various experts and scientific organizations, including those under the United Nations.

On the same day, the publisher, Shogakukan Inc., posted a comment on its website saying the episodes "have not asserted" that the symptoms were definitely caused by radioactive materials from the Fukushima plant.

Shogakukan said it plans to carry "a special feature article" summarizing the opinions of various experts and readers, including critics, next week on its website.

Fukushima protests manga depiction of radiation

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140512_80.html

Fukushima Prefecture has protested against a long-running manga series over its depiction of the health effects of the 2011 nuclear accident.

The prefecture on Monday made an official complaint about "Oishinbo," a story featured in the weekly comic magazine Big Comic Spirits put out by Shogakukan publishing house.

The manga's April 28th issue has the main characters, including a newspaper reporter, suffering nosebleeds after they visit the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

In the latest issue published on Monday, a former mayor of Futaba Town, which co-hosts the plant, and a university associate professor appear in the comic and confirm that the characters had the nosebleeds due to radiation exposure.

They also urge people not to live in Fukushima, saying that it's impossible to make the prefecture habitable, even by removing radioactive substances from wide areas.

Officials of the Fukushima prefectural government say those comments could give the impression that the manga story is reflecting the real situation in Fukushima.

They say the comments are insupportable because they stir up concerns and provoke groundless negative views about the region.

Futaba Town sent a letter of protest to Shogakukan over the manga last Wednesday.

Officials from the publisher say they will have a feature article in the May 19th issue of the magazine that includes the views of experts and criticism of the comments. The article will also be posted on the company's website.

Story writer Tetsu Kariya has rejected criticism over the content of "Oishinbo" and says he will fully refute the charges in a magazine in the near future.

In his blog on Friday, Kariya said people who are protesting through phone calls or emails to the publisher are mistaken.

He also said that he is fully responsible for the content of the manga series.

In the same blog earlier this month, Kariya said he wrote the story based on information he had gathered in Fukushima for 2 years. He said he wonders if critics are suggesting that he should shut his eyes to the truth and write lies that are convenient for some people.

May 12, 2014 - Updated 09:31 UTC

Fukushima Governor: Manga story regrettable

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140512_30.html

The governor of Fukushima Prefecture says the manga story depicting adverse health effects from the 2011 nuclear crisis is extremely regrettable, as it may promote groundless rumors.

Governor Yuhei Sato made the remark to reporters on Monday, after giving a speech in Saitama City, near Tokyo, that seeks support for Fukushima's reconstruction.

Sato referred to the "Oishinbo" story in a weekly comic magazine series. He said it comes at a time when people in Fukushima are striving to rebuild their lives, and could have the overall effect of fomenting rumors.

As for how to deal with the matter, Sato said he will consider a response after studying the situation.

In an issue of the weekly manga series published in April, the lead character and others suffer nosebleeds after visiting the damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant.

The manga issue includes remarks by a former mayor of Futaba Town, which co-hosts the plant, that assert a number of people in Fukushima have the same symptoms.

The town has filed a protest with the publisher of the manga, Shogakukan, saying there is no factual basis for such a claim and it could generate discrimination against people in Fukushima Prefecture.

May 12, 2014 - Updated 09:32 UTC

"Harmful" manga

May 13, 2014

Long-running manga triggers uproar with Fukushima scenes

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201405130035

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Politicians at the national and local level have taken offense with depictions of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in a long-running manga series that until now had focused on food and gourmet cooking.

Installments of "Oishinbo" published in the April 28 and May 12 editions of the weekly Big Comic Spirits magazine also touched a nerve among those in Fukushima who felt the representations jarred with reality.

The manga series has been in print since 1983. A total of 120 million copies of the 110 bound volumes of Oishinbo have been sold.

In one scene, the main character in Oishinbo suddenly develops a nosebleed after visiting the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

In another, characters based on real-life individuals caution people not to live in Fukushima. There is no specific mention of fears about radiation, but the linkage is obvious.

The outraged Fukushima prefectural government posted its view of the manga on its website on May 12.

"The feelings of the Fukushima people were totally ignored and deeply hurt," it said. "The depiction could severely damage the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and tourism industries."

The prefectural government submitted a formal protest against Shogakukan Inc., the publisher of the manga weekly, for the nosebleed depiction, noting that "there have been no confirmed cases of direct damage to health caused by radioactive materials emitted from the nuclear accident."

The issue was also taken up at the national level.

At his May 12 news conference, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, the central government's top spokesman, said, "It has been made clear through the appraisal of experts that there is no causal relationship between radiation exposure among residents and nosebleeds."

The Fukushima prefectural chapter of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, along with Fukushima prefectural assembly members of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan, issued statements of protest as well.

The manga content also rankled Fukushima University because an associate professor who appears under his real name in the May 12 installment says it is impossible to decontaminate the entire prefecture and make it livable for residents again.

Katsumi Nakai, president of Fukushima University, issued a statement that said, "We would like to remind faculty members to act and speak after thoroughly understanding their position."

A sense of unfairness has spread well beyond Fukushima to Osaka in western Japan because the May 12 installment includes a segment in which residents of Osaka complain about health problems after a nearby incinerator processes rubble transported from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto told reporters, "Because of freedom of expression and since it is a manga, fundamentally the artist can freely do what he wants, but I think he went overboard with the depiction that has no basis in fact."

In spite of the sharp reaction, Katsutaka Idogawa, the former mayor of Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, refused to back down from what he was attributed with saying in the manga.

In the May 12 installment, Idogawa is depicted as saying, "Many people suffer from nosebleeds and fatigue because they have been exposed to radiation." In another scene, he says, "People should not live in Fukushima today."

At a May 9 news conference, Idogawa said: "I only spoke the truth. It is wrong for the prefectural government to raise such a fuss."

The editors of the weekly manga magazine posted a comment on its website on May 12 that said, "We hope this contributes to deepening debate on how the administrative branch and mass media should be working."

In the May 19 installment, they said the magazine will include special pages that will incorporate the views of several experts as well as the publication's response to the various protests received.

Magazine officials stressed they had no plans to change the contents of the manga.

Tetsu Kariya, the creator of Oishinbo, revealed on his own blog that he would continue with works related to Fukushima and said: "I believe any plans for interviews should come after that has been completed. I take full responsibility for everything that appears in the manga."

Meanwhile, Fukushima residents had different takes on the controversy over the manga depictions. Hideki Sato, 47, who lives in Fukushima city and works at an after-school child care facility, said the depictions ignored the local efforts to alleviate concerns about radiation exposure through internal radiation exposure testing and food testing.

However, Ruiko Muto, who heads a group of plaintiffs who have filed a lawsuit seeking criminal responsibility for the Fukushima nuclear accident, said: "After the accident, I heard that some people suffered from nosebleeds. It is a fact that radioactive materials exist so no definitive statement can be made about no causal relationship. I feel uncomfortable with the concerted effort to protest the depiction of the nosebleed segment."

The controversy was triggered in part by a tweet by a 32-year-old cram school teacher who uses the handle name "Junichi." The tweet has been retweeted more than 10,000 times.

Junichi said, "I hope that this serves as an opportunity to have more people know about the reality in Fukushima through an examination of the contentious points, rather than cover up various arguments." (This article was written by Naoyuki Takahashi and Takuro Negishi.)

Japan comic rapped for linking nosebleed and radiation exposure

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140513p2g00m0dm039000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A famous long-running Japanese comic called "Oishinbo" faced a wave of criticism from the central and local governments on Monday for hinting that people in Fukushima are suffering nosebleeds due to radiation from the accident-stricken Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex.

"We cannot think of any causal links," top government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said, referring to the comic that depicted the main character as having a nosebleed after visiting the plant, where three nuclear reactors melted down and buildings exploded days after a huge earthquake and tsunami hit northeastern Japan in 2011.

In the latest episode included in a weekly comic magazine issued Monday, a real-life figure, Katsutaka Idogawa, who was the mayor of Futaba in Fukushima Prefecture when the crisis began, told the main character that he thinks "many people in Fukushima suffer nosebleeds and are developing strong fatigue because of exposure."

"That is why I am telling the people of Futaba not to live in Fukushima Prefecture," Idogawa said in the episode. No residents have been allowed to return to homes in the town, which hosts the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

Citing another expert, the comic also said hundreds of people living near an incineration site in the city of Osaka, which accepted rubble generated by the natural disasters in 2011, have experienced nosebleeds or unpleasant symptoms affecting their eyes, throats and skin.

The Fukushima prefectural government lodged a protest in a statement released the same day, saying that the content could fuel harmful rumors and that it is "extremely deplorable."

According to the prefectural government, publisher Shogakukan Inc. asked the prefecture in late April whether nosebleeds and fatigue are linked to exposure.

The Fukushima prefectural government answered that nosebleed could occur due to high-level radiation exposure, but denied people including those evacuated were exposed to radiation at levels that would produce such symptoms.

Both the Osaka city and prefectural governments also protested in writing to Shogakukan on Monday, criticizing what was described in the episode about residents living near the incineration plant as groundless.

Facing the spreading repercussions, Shogakukan said the latest edition of the comic was not intended to conclude that radiation exposure caused nosebleeds, while admitting there are many opinions denying the causal relationship.

"The authors have taken up the issue, hoping that it will help deepen discussions," the company also said in a statement.

Shogakukan plans to run a feature story that will cite opinions of experts, including criticism, in the next issue of the comic magazine to be released next Monday.

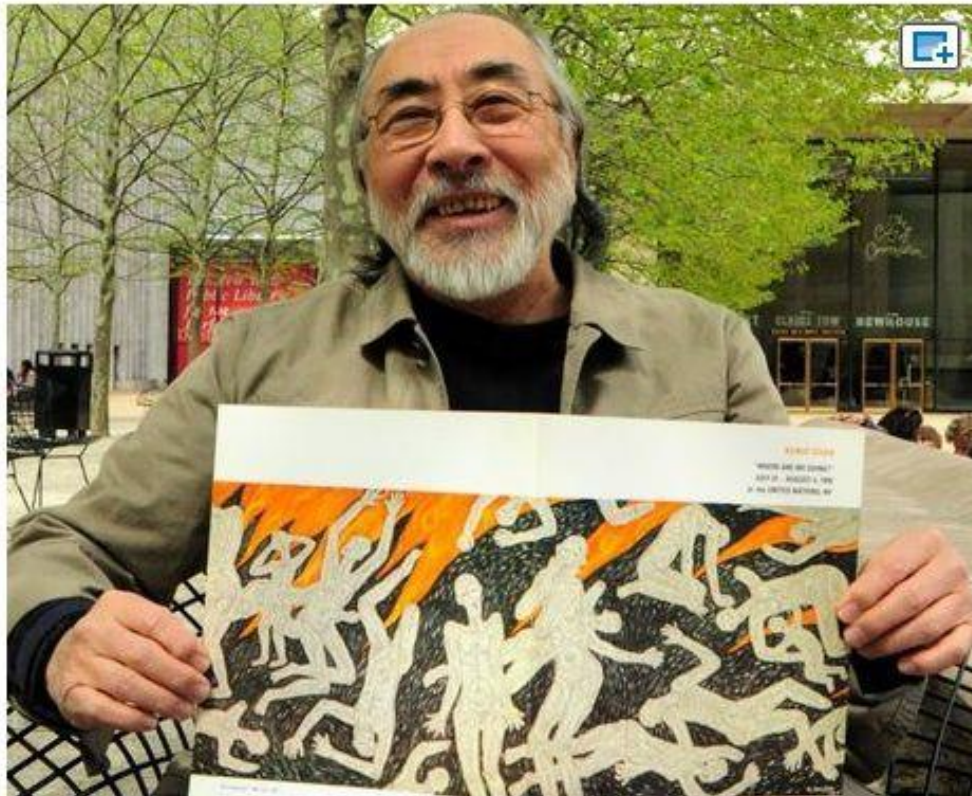
May 13, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Anti-nuke Japanese artist in Brooklyn

May 13, 2014

U.S.-based artist continues anti-nuke message, gives 'answer' to dead father

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201405130039



Kunio Iizuka shows "Flame Nagasaki" in New York on May 7, 2014. (Kyosuke Yamamoto)

By KYOSUKE YAMAMOTO/ Staff Writer

NEW YORK--For more than 30 years, Kunio Iizuka has been producing anti-nuclear paintings in the country that his father hated.

From his studio in Brooklyn, New York, Iizuka has vividly portrayed the horrors of nuclear warfare and the dangers of nuclear energy, delivered his message to the United Nations and influenced a new generation of artists.

But now, the 75-year-old chairman of the Japanese Artists Association of New York feels it may be time to slow down.

"I don't have the power to paint pictures about atomic bombs anymore," he said.

Iizuka was born in Tokyo, but family issues prevented his parents from marrying. Raised by his mother, Iizuka often read art magazines and developed an interest in overseas artwork.

After graduating from high school, he studied at an art school in Japan and then moved to the United States in 1961.

He began his art activities in earnest in 1964 based on the vague theme "humans and civilization." However, Iizuka narrowed his focus to nuclear weapons in 1971, after he temporarily returned to Japan and met his father in Nagasaki after a long interval.

His father took him to the Nagasaki International Culture Hall (the current Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum), where Iizuka was shocked by the photos of children charred by the U.S. atomic bombing of the city on Aug. 9, 1945.

When they left the hall, his father told Iizuka for the first time, "I was also exposed to radiation (from the bomb)."

A day after the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Iizuka's father, then 27, went to the destroyed city to look for survivors.

"I hate the United States for dropping atomic bombs (on Japan)," the father told his son.

His father's remarks and the photos of the burned children weighed heavily on Iizuka after he returned to New York. He developed a hatred for nuclear weapons and their destructive power, and decided to spread an "anti-atomic bomb" message to the world through his art.

In 1980, he began painting under this theme while reading books about atomic bomb victims. After five years of work, he completed "Flame Nagasaki" and "Fallout Hiroshima," both 2 meters high and 4.5 meters wide.

“Flame Nagasaki” shows children struggling against orange flames. “Fallout Hiroshima” features people reduced to ashes by the nuclear blast.

These paintings were his “answer” to his father, who had died before they were completed. With the cooperation of atomic bomb victims’ organizations and the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Iizuka held an exhibition in the lobby of the United Nations in 1995.

Since then, he has painted under the theme “human tragedies, victims.” His art includes works related to the 1986 nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States, and the March 2011 triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

In his “Mother and Child,” a weeping mother holds a dead child in her arms. The sun is black, and the buildings on the red background appear to be nuclear reactors.

Although Iizuka might be considering hanging up his paint brushes, about 10 young Japanese artists living in New York formed a group based on the anti-nuclear themes that Iizuka has long espoused. “Inheriting my ideas against atomic bombs and nuclear power plants, these young artists will continue to paint pictures,” Iizuka said.

Hosokawa in poor health

May 15, 2014

Ex-PM Hosokawa to suspend antinuclear activities due to poor health

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140515p2g00m0dm083000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, who unsuccessfully ran in the Tokyo gubernatorial race in February as an opponent of nuclear power, will suspend his activities with an antinuclear nonprofit organization for the time being due to poor health, people familiar with the matter said Thursday.

The 76-year-old former lawmaker has not been feeling well since late March and found it necessary to rest, they said, adding he will undergo a medical checkup next Monday.

Hosokawa has just become the head of the Japan Assembly for Nuclear Free Renewable Energy, which he established with former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on May 7. The two former leaders joined forces to promote the antinuclear cause in the Tokyo governor's race.

While on an outing in late March, Hosokawa collapsed on the first of two occasions and suffered bruises to his face, according to the sources. He has continued to suffer from ill health, including dizziness, they said.

At a recent meeting, Hosokawa had confided that he was not feeling well.

A person close to Hosokawa said the former prime minister had been busy even after the gubernatorial election, expressing hope that he will get better with rest.

Hosokawa will remain the head of the antinuclear organization, but has offered to step down from his posts at the Tohoku University of Art and Design in the city of Yamagata, and its sister school, the Kyoto University of Art and Design, in the city of Kyoto, according to the sources.

May 15, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Civic groups against restarting Sendai plant

May 23, 2014

Civic groups against restart of Sendai plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140523_06.html

Civic groups are urging the government of Kagoshima prefecture in southern Japan to rethink plans to restart a nuclear plant. They cite the risks of volcanic eruptions near the facility.

Representatives of 7 groups from Kagoshima and Tokyo visited the local government office on Thursday.

They submitted a petition with 3,000 signatures against restarting the Sendai nuclear power station. Kyushu Electric Power operates the plant in Kagoshima.

Their visit came a day after a court in central Japan ruled against plans to restart the Ohi nuclear plant, citing insufficient safety measures.

The Sendai plant is at the top of a list of facilities across the country undergoing safety checks, one precondition for restarting.

The civic groups insist the nuclear regulator has not considered the risk of volcanic rock and ash reaching the plant if a nearby inactive volcano named Aira Caldera erupts.

They say pyroclastic flows are believed to have reached area where the plant now stands some 30,000 years ago.

The operator of the plant needs approval from the prefectural government as well as the host city before turning reactors back on. Some neighboring municipalities are requesting more information on the plan and power to approve it.

Wednesday's ruling on the Ohi plant could encourage surrounding municipalities to get more involved in plans to restart reactors.

May 22, 2014 - Updated 20:40 UTC

Ex-premiers should "spark waves through antinuclear channels"

May 24, 2014

Editorial: Ex-PMs Hosokawa and Koizumi urged to make another bid for antinuclear goal

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20140524p2a00m0na019000c.html>

An antinuclear organization called the Japan Assembly for Nuclear Free Renewable Energy (JANFRE), launched under a partnership of former prime ministers Morihiro Hosokawa and Junichiro Koizumi, is renewing the aim of a breakaway from nuclear power -- this time as a national movement.

Hosokawa unsuccessfully ran in the Tokyo gubernatorial race this past February under an antinuclear banner, with Koizumi's backing.

While the ex-premiers' enthusiasm merits credit, there are limitations to a strategy that relies on their ability to get their message across. Specifically speaking, it will be called into question whether or not JANFRE is able to substantially play out its role as a nongovernmental organization with respect to goals such as making policy proposals and cooperating with private organizations.

Additional initiators of JANFRE -- a general incorporated association -- include philosopher Takeshi Umehara and writer Jakuchō Setouchi. The group is also endorsed by actress Sayuri Yoshinaga and Kabuki actor Ichikawa Ennosuke, among other celebrities. The group aims to make a departure from political activities, as well as spearhead education-related initiatives such as inspection tours and dialogue forums.

The recent ruling by the Fukui District Court against reactor restarts at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture has highlighted the seriousness of nuclear plant safety issues. Nevertheless, the presence of antinuclear advocates in the Diet is on the wane. Meanwhile, Hosokawa has

commented that the government-sanctioned basic energy plan is tantamount to "promoting reactor reactivation without reflecting on or learning lessons (from the Fukushima nuclear disaster)."

It makes sense, then, that despite their crushing defeat in the capital's gubernatorial race, the former state leaders have decided to carry on their antinuclear activities.

Although Hosokawa has suffered from an unstable physical condition since the establishment of JANFRE on May 7, he attended the group's first conference on May 23 along with Koizumi.

During the organization's May 7 inaugural meeting, Koizumi demonstrated his unwavering enthusiasm toward realizing zero nuclear power. "Even if we are referred to as 'persons from the past,' we will strive to turn this country into one that is free from nuclear power," he commented, also pledging to "do my best until the day I die."

Koizumi stepped down as an advisor to a private research institute led by the business community at the end of last month, thereby paving the way for him to come to the forefront of the antinuclear movement.

We do have requests for the former leaders, though. One factor behind Hosokawa's failure to receive a boost in the Tokyo race was the tough reality wherein the former premiers -- who are supposed to possess strong power to dispatch their message -- were unable to win sympathy from voters by relying solely upon the slogan of "zero nuclear power." **It is imperative, then, for the duo to make both organizational and policy-related efforts by establishing collaborative networks with local governments, nonprofit organizations and other entities -- as well as by issuing concrete and convincing appeals for a breakaway from nuclear power by utilizing natural energy sources.**

There is also a fine line between the former premiers and their political activities. While Koizumi has clearly stated that he will not support any more elections, some members of political circles suspect that his group may become involved in campaigns in one way or another, such as the Fukushima gubernatorial election this fall. If the pair takes part in local election campaigns with their political motives plain to see, therefore, it will certainly be even more questionable than the Tokyo election as to whether or not they can win sympathy from residents.

Political parties have generally shown a cool reaction to the former premiers' activities. That said, the significance of Hosokawa and Koizumi starting over with the support of learned individuals from various quarters may be more significant than we think. Let us hope they will spark waves through antinuclear channels -- in a way that will also appeal to the younger generation.

May 24, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Administration totally ignored opponents to nukes

May 25, 2014

Abe administration ignored massive public opposition to nuclear power

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201405250023

By ATSUSHI KOMORI/ Senior Staff Writer

More than 90 percent of respondents during a public comment period on the Abe administration's basic energy policy were opposed to nuclear power generation, according to an Asahi Shimbun estimate released on May 25.

The Asahi Shimbun made the determination by tallying how many of 2,109 of about 19,000 comments sent to the government from December to January were in opposition.

Failing to take into account that overwhelming public sentiment, the Cabinet approved in April the basic energy policy, which described nuclear power generation as an “important base load electricity source.” The base load electricity source means that nuclear power will continue to be relied on to meet a percentage of the electricity demand, regardless of the season or time of day.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry released on Dec. 6, 2013, the draft of the basic energy policy, the first compiled by the Abe administration since the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant triggered by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

After releasing the draft, the Abe administration gathered public comments for a month until Jan. 6 through e-mails, faxes and other means. In all, about 19,000 responses were sent to the government. The industry ministry disclosed representative comments in February. However, it did not tally how many replies it received were for or against nuclear power generation.

“We paid attention not to the number of comments (for or against nuclear power generation) but to the contents of those comments,” industry minister Toshimitsu Motegi told the Diet in February.

The Asahi Shimbun asked the ministry to release all the comments under the information disclosure law. In response, the ministry disclosed 2,109 e-mails (totaling 2,301 pages) with the names of the senders redacted to protect their personal information.

The ministry said that it released e-mails that were submitted to the ministry early in the public comment period. It will decide by September whether it will release the remaining responses.

As for the 2,109 e-mails, The Asahi Shimbun counted how many were for or against nuclear power generation. It found that 2,008 of them, or 95.2 percent, opposed nuclear power generation. Only 33, or 1.6 percent, supported nuclear power. The remaining 68 e-mails, or 3.2 percent, were “other replies.”

As for the reasons why they opposed nuclear power generation, many of the 2,008 respondents said that the nuclear accident in Fukushima Prefecture has yet to be resolved or that there are no disposal sites for spent nuclear fuels. Some of the comments also criticized the draft plan, which regarded nuclear power as an important electricity source, for going against public opinion.

Respondents that supported nuclear power generation cited its low operating costs and other factors as reasons for their backing.

The previous administration, led by the Democratic Party of Japan, decided in 2012 to terminate nuclear power generation by the end of the 2030s. However, the Abe administration has taken a strong stance toward restarting the nation's idled nuclear reactors after they pass new safety inspections.

Rally in Tokyo against Sendai restart

June 1, 2014

Rally held against restarting Sendai nuclear plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140601_14.html

A rally has been held in central Tokyo to oppose the restart of a nuclear power plant in southern Japan. The Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture could be the first to return online under stricter safety standards.

Hundreds of people gathered in front of the Diet on Sunday carrying placards and banners. Senior citizens and families also joined the demonstration.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority is in the final phase of safety screenings for the plant. All of Japan's

reactors have to meet the stricter standards introduced last year in response to the 2011 Fukushima accident.

The protest was organized by opponents of nuclear power who have been holding rallies every Friday near the prime minister's office.

A woman who brought her 2-year-old son to Sunday's rally said she cannot accept the restart of the Sendai plant for the sake of future generations.

She urged the government to put priority on people's lives rather than the economy.

A man praised a recent court ruling that ordered the operator of another nuclear plant not to restart its reactors.

He said the ruling tells people that nuclear power plants must not be operated in a country where earthquakes occur frequently. He added that all the reactors in Japan should be scrapped as soon as possible.

The organizers say about 10,000 people took part in the demonstration, but police say they counted about 1,300 participants.

Jun. 1, 2014 - Updated 15:09 UTC

No more nukes, say utilities' shareholders

June 12, 2014

Shareholders of 9 major utilities demand withdrawal from nuke power

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201406120042>

By MARI FUJISAKI/ Staff Writer

Shareholders at the nation's nine electric utilities with nuclear power plants have submitted proposals demanding they abolish or reduce their reliance on nuclear energy to generate electricity.

It is the first time that shareholders of all the utilities have sought such action. But the proposals are unlikely to lead to major change in policy because the shareholders represent a small number of total shares, the bulk of which are held by financial institutions and other corporate entities.

The proposals come ahead of annual general shareholders' meetings scheduled to be held by the power companies on June 26. It is the first time that shareholders of all nine major power companies have

pushed for a withdrawal from nuclear power since the onset of the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011.

Despite the move, each utility is still planning to restart its nuclear power plants because the government's basic energy plan calls nuclear power an "important base-load power source."

Shareholders of Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 plant, demanded that TEPCO review its Comprehensive Special Business Plan.

Since the utility's plan is based on a resumption of operations at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture in July, shareholders called on TEPCO to change the plan, saying it should "be based on the assumption that all nuclear power plants (in Japan) will not be restarted."

The Tokyo metropolitan government, which holds a 1.2-percent stake in TEPCO, did not make any proposals to the utility.

In contrast to his predecessor, Naoki Inose, who submitted a shareholder proposal asking for management transparency at TEPCO, Tokyo Governor Yoichi Masuzoe chose not to do so.

"It is the central government that decides what to do about TEPCO," a Tokyo government official said. "(The Tokyo government) won't be making any proposals as a shareholder."

Elsewhere, the Osaka city government, the top shareholder of Kansai Electric Power Co., submitted a proposal urging the utility to rely more on renewable energy sources and natural gas-fired thermal power, and reduce dependence on nuclear power.

Protest against Sendai restart

June 14, 2014

Anti-nuclear activists ratchet up pressure to block restart of Kagoshima reactors

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201406140025>



Holding banners and signs, opponents of nuclear power march to the local branch of Kyushu Electric Power Co. in Kagoshima, capital of Kagoshima Prefecture, after a protest rally June 13. (Koichi Ueda)

By MASANOBU HIGASHIYAMA/ Staff Writer

KAGOSHIMA--More than 1,000 protesters assembled before the prefectural government building here June 13 to oppose moves to restart a local nuclear power plant.

If the Sendai nuclear plant in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, were to go back online, it would mark the nation's first restart under new safety standards brought in after the March 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima Prefecture.

The rally, which organizers deemed a "critical phase" in their anti-nuclear efforts, coincided with the start of the prefectural assembly session.

"Governor, why don't you pick a fight with the central government like the Hakodate mayor has done to protect the life and health of residents?" Satoshi Kamata, a noted nonfiction writer who has written extensively about labor and environmental pollution issues, barked through a loudspeaker.

Kamata, 76, was referring to a lawsuit filed in April by the Hakodate municipal government in Hokkaido to demand a halt to the construction of a nuclear power plant across the Tsugaru Strait in Oma, Aomori Prefecture.

“After serious problems of pollution in the 1970s, Japanese learned that their lives are more important than the nation’s economy. Why are we regressing to the same situation in the question of nuclear power?” asked Kamata, who flew in from Tokyo, where he regularly participates in a weekly anti-nuclear protest held outside the prime minister’s office.

Among the other participants were evacuees from the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The rally was organized by about 90 groups, including a local co-op.

The protesters submitted to prefectural officials a petition signed by about 120,000 people from across Japan in protest to the restart of the plant, which is operated by Kyushu Electric Power Co.

Safety inspections by the Nuclear Regulation Authority of Sendai’s two reactors have progressed the most out of all the nation’s reactors that are currently undergoing safety checks for restarts.

The NRA’s new safety standards were based on the aim of preventing a recurrence of a severe accident such as the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

The nuclear watchdog plans to wrap up its assessment of the safety of the plant in July or later. At the prefectural assembly session, Governor Yuichiro Ito said, “The central government needs to guarantee the safety of the plant when it is restarted.”

Ito reiterated a plan to hold meetings in five localities that are located within a 30-kilometer radius of the plant after the NRA completes its safety inspections. He intends to have NRA officials explain the results of the safety examination to gain the understanding of local residents.

Last year, the NRA expanded the area that should be fully prepared for a possible nuclear accident to 30 km from 8-10 km. Local governments in the 30-km radius are expected to put emergency response measures in place.

The opposition bloc is poised to attack the prefectural government about flaws in evacuation plans by the municipalities in the area.

The governor and the prefectural assembly are not expected to debate whether they should give consent to the restart during the current session, which winds up July 4.

“The NRA is not saying that its screenings secure absolute safety of the plant, but politicians are trying to propagate the idea that as long as nuclear plants clear the NRA standards, they will be safe,” Kamata said. “We are going back to the ‘safety myth’ of the pre-nuclear disaster era.”

Protesters oppose restarting Sendai plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140613_28.html

About 700 people have taken part in a rally in Kagoshima City to oppose a plan to restart the Sendai nuclear plant in southern Japan.

The plant operated by Kyushu Electric Power could be the first to resume operation under stricter safety standards.

The protesters gathered in front of the prefectural government building on Friday when the prefectural assembly session began. They included local residents and people from Tokyo and Fukushima Prefecture.

A 65-year-old man from Satumasendai City said his family lives in a care home less than 30 kilometers from the Sendai nuclear plant. The city hosts the plant.

He said the plant should never be restarted because no evacuation plan has been drawn up for the area if a nuclear emergency occurs.

A woman from Tokyo, who joined the demonstration with her family, said Japanese people are currently living without nuclear power. She accused the utility companies of only thinking about profits, and urged them not to threaten people's lives.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority is in the final phase of safety screenings for the Sendai plant. All the reactors in Japan will have to meet the stricter standards introduced last year in response to the 2011 Fukushima accident.

Kagoshima Governor Yuichiro Ito says he will decide whether to agree to the restart if the plant passes the safety screening, while taking into account the views of the prefectural assembly.

Jun. 13, 2014 - Updated 06:51 UTC

Send a postcard to support the judges of Fukui Court

<https://www.facebook.com/dunrenard>

« CALL FOR SUPPORT from the Japanese Antinuclear people

Thru Pierre Fetet,

<http://www.fukushima-blog.com/2014/06/centrale-nucleaire-d-oi-soutenez-les-magistrats.html>

Ōi Nuclear Plant in Japan: Let's support those judges !

We all remember the outrageous restart of the 2 reactors at the Oi Nuclear Plant in July 2012. Two years after, the Court judges ruled that the restart opponents are right !

That Court decision is very important for the Japanese Antinuclear people, not only for its Court order to not restart the Oi Nuke plant but also for the general content of that Court decision. That Court decision is important because it sets a precedent in Japanese jurisprudence which can be use to stop other restarts.

Thank to support those Court judges who had the courage to resist to the Nuclear lobby pressure.

xxxxxxx

Call for support

Last May 21, 2014, the Regional Court of Fukui Prefecture has rendered a judgment rejecting the demand for retart of the 2 reactors of the Oi Nuclear plant.

(see the link for details:

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201405220026>)

We Japanese antinuclear activists, we wish to support those judges who rendered that judgment, because they will now become targeted and pressured by the Central Government and by the Nuclear lobby.

Therefore it is very important that the Court will perceive that the people are fully supporting their judgment.

To that effect, we would be very grateful to you to send a postcard (which content can be read by anyone, no enveloppe) adressed to the names of those 3 judges at this adress :

M. H. HIGUCHI

M. A. ISHIDA

MME Y. MIYAKE

Fukusi Chiho Saibansho Minji Dainibu

1-1-1 Haruyama, Fukui

Fukui 910-8524

JAPON

For example you may write :

"Thank you for the judgement to stop Ōi reactor restart"

It is very important to mention Oi !

Thank you in advance for your help. »

Send a postcard (2)

More information about this initiative and the Fukui judgment from Kurumi Sugita.

Oi Nuclear Plant in Japan: Let's support those judges!

We all remember the outrageous restart of the 2 reactors at the Oi Nuclear Plant in July 2012. Two years later, the Regional Court judges ruled that the restart opponents were right!

This Court decision is of great importance, not only for its order not to restart the Oi reactors but also for its general admonition that can be extended to the entire nuclear industry and even to any industrial pollution unrelated to nuclear power. For the judgment clearly places human rights over corporate economic rights.

"It is legally unacceptable to discuss people's rights concerning their very existence and economic concerns about electricity rates in the same terms," the court said.

The ruling also rejected the argument that "suspending nuclear power generation is detrimental to the national interest because it will lead to increasing Japan's trade deficit and drain of national wealth."

It said, "National wealth means that people can live lives firmly rooted in rich land."

(translated in Asahi.com. see below)

Please help us to support the Court judges who have written the historical judgment and who are now facing nuclear lobby pressure.

Call for support

Last May 21, 2014, the Regional Court of Fukui Prefecture rendered a judgment rejecting the demand for restart of the 2 reactors of the Oi Nuclear plant.

We Japanese antinuclear activists wish to support those judges because they will now become targeted and pressured by the government and the Nuclear lobby.

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Fukui 910-8524
JAPON

For example you canwrite:
"Thank you for the judgment to stop Oi reactor restart"

It is very important to mention Oi !
Thank you in advance for your help.

Partial presentation of the judgment, according to the article of the Asahi newspaper of May 22nd:
The Fukui District Court's rulingMay 21 on the Oi nuclear power plant is a sober judgment that fully reflects the lessons learned from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. Both Kansai Electric Power Co., the operator of the plant, and the government cannot afford to ignore the ruling.

The court ordered Kansai Electric not to restart the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors, which are currently offline for regular maintenance.

The court said there was no way of knowing when an earthquake far more powerful than one the electric utility has braced for will strike.

Such an event, the court stated, could have grave consequences for residents living within a 250-kilometer radius of the plant in Oi, Fukui Prefecture.

Presiding Judge Hideaki Higuchi noted that the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant forced the evacuation of 150,000 local residents, which was the catalyst for the deaths of 60 people, including hospitalized patients.

The catastrophic accident three years ago revealed "the true nature of risks inherent in nuclear power technology and the scale of damage" that a serious nuclear accident can cause, Higuchi said.

“If the court avoided making a judgment on whether there is even a million-to-one chance of such an accident happening (at the Oi plant), it would amount to a dereliction of duty,” he added.

Presiding over a case involving nuclear power requires considerable expertise. In past rulings, Japanese courts tended to accept what the plant operator and the government claimed at face value.

We give high marks to the Fukui District Court’s decision. It suggests that the court is taking its role as vital guardian of the law very seriously after the nuclear disaster.

What is especially notable about the ruling is that it is based entirely on the viewpoint of protecting the lives and livelihoods of people.

Kansai Electric argued that the reactors need to be brought back online to ensure a stable supply of electricity and to cut costs.

But the court ruling roundly criticized the utility’s argument.

“It is legally unacceptable to discuss people’s rights concerning their very existence and economic concerns about electricity rates in the same terms,” the court said.

The ruling also rejected the argument that “suspending nuclear power generation is detrimental to the national interest because it will lead to increasing Japan’s trade deficit and drain of national wealth.”

It said, “National wealth means that people can live lives firmly rooted in rich land.”

Kansai Electric said it will appeal the ruling. The court ruling is also certain to elicit an angry response from the business community and the local governments hosting the nuclear plant, which both had their sights set on the reactors restarting.

The district court’s decision is bound to be welcomed by many Japanese who have been shaken by the great suffering that residents of Fukushima Prefecture have had to endure.

After the nuclear accident, the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) was established as a more independent nuclear industry watchdog. This had led to more stringent nuclear safety standards than before.

The Abe administration has moved to reactivate idled reactors if they pass the NRA's safety checks.

But the court also pointed out the "limit of human ability in the face of (the great forces of) nature."

There are still many unsolved issues with regard to the Fukushima nuclear disaster; for example, what precisely caused the accident and why damage cut across such wide areas.

The ruling was intended as a strong warning against a head-long rush to bring reactors back online based only on limited scientific knowledge.

The operators of nuclear plants, the government and the NRA should offer clear and straightforward answers to the questions raised by the court ruling.

They should not be allowed to ignore them, banking on the possibility that a higher court may overturn the lower court's decision.

--The Asahi Shimbun, May 22

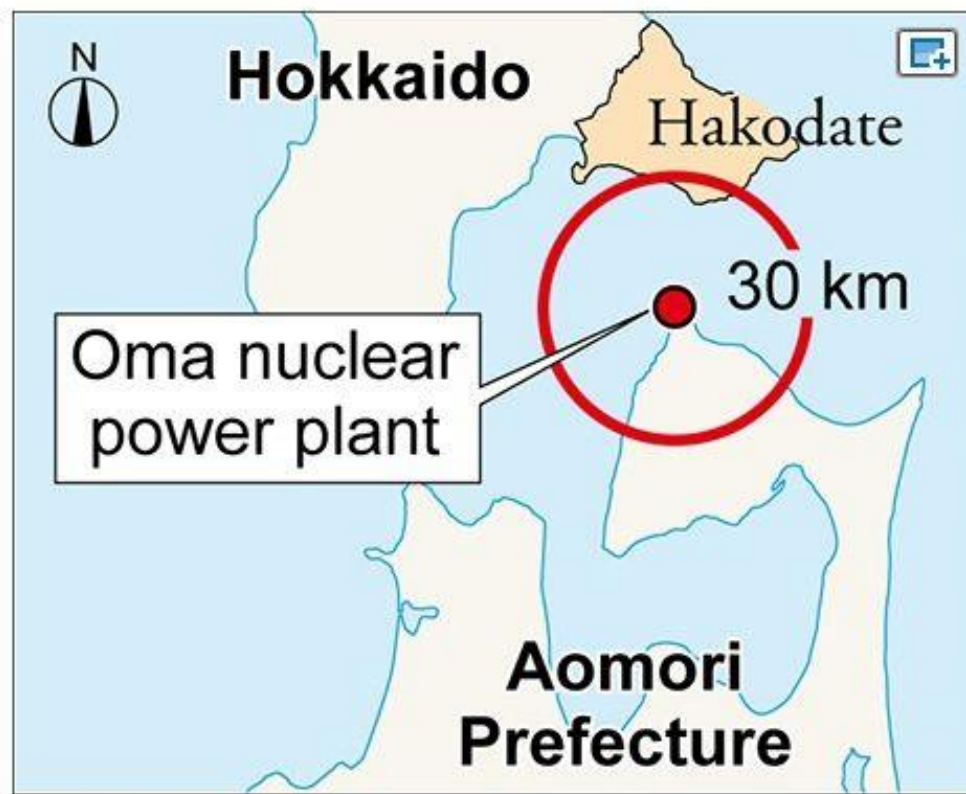
<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201405220026>

Hakodate lawsuit (Oma plant)

July 4, 2014

Court hears first arguments in Oma nuclear plant lawsuit

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201407040041>



The Asahi Shimbun

By KOZUE ISOZAKI/ Staff Writer

Hakodate city government's lawsuit to halt construction of a nuclear power plant across the Tsugaru Strait got under way as the town's mayor asserted that an accident there would bring catastrophe to neighboring municipalities.

The opening arguments were heard July 3 at the Tokyo District Court.

Both the central government and the Electric Power Development Co. (J-Power), which is the operator of the nuclear power plant in Oma, Aomori Prefecture, on the main island of Honshu, are being sued by the government of Hakodate in Hokkaido.

Until now, no municipality in Japan has ever taken legal action to stop a nuclear power plant from being built.

Construction of the Oma plant started in May 2008, but was suspended after the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The natural disaster ultimately led to the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant. Construction resumed October 2012.

Hakodate mayor Toshiki Kudo had advocated against the construction of the plant since being elected a month after the Fukushima crisis unfolded.

Speaking to the court, Kudo explained how he had continuously requested that the government and J-Power suspend construction of the Oma plant.

"If a severe accident occurs, the municipalities in the area will collapse," he said. He argued that Hakodate and other municipalities in a 30-kilometer radius of the plant should be given the right to consent to the construction.

He also insisted that a nuclear power plant should not be built in an area where an effective evacuation plan cannot be established.

However, the central government, representatives of which were also present at the court, argued that Hakodate is not qualified to request the suspension of construction, referring to past precedents on building nuclear power plants and laws on regulating them.

Meanwhile, **J-Power submitted a report contending that the proposed risks regarding the facility are indeterminable because the power plant is still under construction. Therefore, it said, the litigation has no legal merit.**

Fukui court order sets precedent

July 6, 2014

Fukui court ruling barring nuclear plant restart seen as precedent

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140706p2g00m0dm010000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Japanese plaintiffs suing to block nuclear power plants from resuming operation hope a recent victory in the Fukui District Court points the way forward.

Plaintiffs in 14 of at least 16 antinuclear lawsuits in courts around the country are using or will use the Fukui court decision in their arguments, lawyers involved in the cases said Saturday.

The lawsuits have been filed in the wake of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, triggered by the devastating March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

On May 21, the Fukui court ruled that it will not allow two reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture to be restarted, citing risks to the public.

That ruling "has pointed out the potential risks applicable to any nuclear power plant, making it natural" for the plaintiffs to use the ruling as evidence in their cases, said Hiroyuki Kawai, a lawyer and co-head of a liaison group of lawyers involved in antinuclear lawsuits.

In the ruling, the Fukui court said nuclear plants are "merely a tool for generating electricity and thus inferior to people's fundamental rights" to life and that it "would be natural to suspend nuclear plants if they pose specific risks."

It also said plaintiffs who live within 250 kilometers of the Oi plant face real risks.

All 48 commercial reactors in Japan are idle after most were shut down for routine checkups. To be reactivated, they must pass a safety assessment based on a new set of regulations introduced last July, but none has yet passed the safety review.

After the Fukushima disaster, lawsuits to prevent nuclear power plants from being reactivated were filed at district courts nationwide, including Tokyo, Osaka, Shizuoka and Sapporo, the plaintiffs' lawyers said.

Plaintiffs fighting to stop Kyushu Electric Power Co. from reactivating two reactors at a nuclear power plant in southwestern Japan have cited the Fukui court ruling as evidence in arguments to the Kagoshima District Court where the case is being tried.

The reactors at the Sendai power plant are considered the closest to being allowed to restart.

Plaintiffs in four other suits, including one to stop the Nos. 1-3 reactors at Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture from operating again, also cited the May ruling.

And plaintiffs in nine other lawsuits also plan to do so, the lawyers said.

Those nine cases include ones to stop the reactivation of the Nos. 1-7 reactors at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear complex in Niigata Prefecture, and the Nos. 1 and 2 reactors of Hokuriku Electric Power Co.'s Shika nuclear plant in Ishikawa Prefecture.

Before the Fukui ruling, the only victory by plaintiffs against the restart of a nuclear power plant was in 2006 when the Kanazawa District Court ordered Hokuriku Electric not to operate the No. 2 reactor at Shika plant.

July 06, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Koizumi blasts pro-nuclear strategy again

July 8, 2014

Koizumi: Government's nuclear-energy logic a complete failure

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201407080022

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi again blasted the Abe administration's pro-nuclear energy strategy, saying the plan to restart reactors across the nation is "too optimistic" and goes against public opinion.

"The logic of those who have promoted nuclear power generation has completely failed," Koizumi said during a speech on July 7 in Tokyo.

After the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami caused the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the Nuclear Regulation Authority was established to upgrade safety in the industry. It is now screening utilities' applications for restarting their reactors, all of which currently remain offline.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government said the NRA has "the world's strictest safety standards," but Koizumi said he doubts the claim.

“Are there any (nuclear facilities) around where evacuation routes have been properly secured?” Koizumi asked. “Anti-terrorism measures are also the poorest. (The NRA) has not developed the world’s strictest standards. It is impossible to resume reactor operations.”

The former prime minister said the Abe administration has not fulfilled its responsibility to the people of Japan.

“If compared with restrictions in Britain, the United States and France, how are things going with (the new Japanese standards)?” Koizumi said. “(The government) has the responsibility to clearly explain why the Japanese criteria can be described as the world’s most stringent, even when they are compared with global standards.”

Although the Abe administration is currently trying to find final disposal sites for nuclear waste generated from plants around Japan, Koizumi said the government should first declare the abolition of nuclear power before building those facilities.

“The administration will not be able to win the cooperation of the citizens unless it decides to abolish all nuclear plants,” Koizumi said. “It is impossible to gain support (from the people) after additional nuclear waste is generated as a result of reactor restarts. (The government plan is) too optimistic.”

In the Tokyo gubernatorial election in February, Koizumi supported another former prime minister, Morihiro Hosokawa, who campaigned on a platform of abandoning nuclear energy. Hosokawa placed a distant third in that election.

The two retired politicians later established the Japan Assembly for Nuclear Free Renewable Energy to continue their anti-nuclear power activities.

During the July 7 speech, Koizumi also mentioned his future plans.

“I will lead a national campaign to reduce the number of reactors to zero,” he said. “Those who hope to abolish atomic power account for the majority of the Japanese people. Politicians have to make the right decision. The day will surely come when we can make the shift (to no nuclear-power generation).”

Kawauchi residents don't want evacuation order lifted

July 10, 2014

Gov't to lift evacuation order on Fukushima village amid residents' opposition

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140710p2a00m0na006000c.html>

The government is planning to lift an evacuation order on part of a Fukushima Prefecture village within a 20-kilometer radius from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, making it the second such case since the outbreak of the nuclear disaster.

The evacuation order for the eastern part of Kawauchi village will be lifted on July 26, the government told the Kawauchi village office, its village assembly and district mayors' association on July 9. The move comes after the government concluded that the radiation levels and infrastructure improvements in the village have met conditions for residents' permanent return.

If the order is lifted, the area will be the second such case in the prefecture following the Miyakoji district of the city of Tamura, where an evacuation order was terminated in April. However, it is uncertain whether the evacuation order on the eastern part of Kawauchi will be lifted as scheduled because many residents are demanding the lifting be postponed. The government will hold a briefing session for residents on July 13 and 14.

The central government also conveyed to local authorities in Kawauchi that it is planning to ease the designation of a residency restriction zone in the village into an area preparing for the lifting of an evacuation order.

Starting in April, 275 residents in 139 households in an area preparing for the lifting of an evacuation order became entitled to a longer stay at their homes. They are part of the 329 residents in 157 households in the village's evacuation zone within a 20-kilometer radius from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. However, there are only a handful of residents who have actually returned to the village for a lengthy stay.

Hiroo Inoue, counselor for the Cabinet Office's support team for nuclear disaster victims, and his fellow officials visited the Kawauchi village office on July 9 and explained that the yearly additional exposure doses stood below 20 millisieverts thanks to the completion of decontaminated work and that improving the infrastructure was almost complete.

An administrative district hosting some 80 percent of residents whose residential areas' evacuation orders are planned to be lifted on July 26 filed a six-point request with the Kawauchi village office at the end of June, demanding decontamination work be redone and the lifting of the evacuation order be postponed.

July 10, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Women of Fukushima's appeal

<http://onna100nin.up.seesaa.net/image/Speech20At20the20Foreign20Correspondents20Club20of20Japan20July2032C202014.pdf>

At the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan July 3, 2014

We, Fukushima Women against Nukes (Women of Fukushima Demand End to Nuclear Power), submitted the following 4 demands to the Ministry of Environment, which has critical responsibilities for decontamination and monitoring of radioactive materials, removal of earthquake debris and tainted soil as well as health care program for victims of the nuclear accidents.

1. Make plans to reduce radioactive exposure and carry them out immediately, getting out of too much dependence on decontamination.
2. Based on the principle of the Act for relief and support of the nuclear power plant disaster victims, especially the affected children, make drastic changes to the policies of the Ministry of Environment in dealing with the affected areas, victims, and radioactive contamination.
3. Listen to voices of victims and reflect them to the policies from now on.
4. Environment Minister, Nobuteru Ishihara, shall resign.

The demands are to protest against the skull session with the experts about decontamination held in Fukushima on June 15th, as well as the remark of Environment Minister Ishihara "What matters in the end is the money" on the following day.

The skull session had been closed-door in the original plan, rejecting the participation of public audience. Several experts and hosts are associated with organizations which promote nuclear power, so that the selection of members wasn't well balanced at all. There were also practices which are totally lack of transparency and fairness, such as;

- Acts to obscure affiliations of experts and hosts neatly
- Absence of residents' participation or representation
- Substantive downgrade of decontamination target by shifting to measured results of personal dosimeter which measures only a part of external exposure

We strongly protest all of those practices.

Yet this is not only about the Ministry of Environment, but it's spread over various governmental agencies including the Reconstruction Agency, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Their common premises are:

- No harm would be affected by this level of radioactive contamination
- No health issues due to the nuclear power plant accident have been identified yet
- Continuous living in the affected area is desirable both for victims and economy of the country

To derive policies aligned with those premises, they practiced actions such as;

- Sabotage of important investigations
- Denial of the existence of the subjective symptoms of poor health by individuals
- Underestimation and disregard of initial contamination and internal exposure - Disregard of the reports about the health effects of the Chernobyl accident from the local doctors
- Unfair procedures to prevent submits of objections or counterarguments from citizens
- Diffusion of the radioactive materials by policies with priority on economy and vested interests (The policies in place are getting into completely opposite direction where it should go to minimize damages of the nuclear accidents; rubble processing in the wide area , constructions of incineration facility for radioactive debris.)

The lack of sincerity on the part of the government has brought unnecessary contamination to citizens. They haven't carried out their missions to prevent expansion of the damage.

In Fukushima Prefecture, among the youth and children under 18-year-old at the time of the disaster, the number of patient of thyroid cancer has been increasing. According to the announcement made on June 10th, 89 children have or are suspected to have thyroid cancer. And many out of 50 who already underwent an operation has been suffered more severe cases such as lymph node metastasis, lung transition, and hoarseness. We are anxiously waiting for the publication of reports with more detailed and accurate information. There are also concerns of an immunity system, respiratory system, circulatory organ system, alimentary system, nerve system, psychiatric disorders and others. Yet faithful investigations haven't been conducted, the government has acted to suppress the voices of concern.

However, we are aware of the data about children who live in the post-Chernobyl nuclear-disaster Ukraine and Belarus. The number of diseases and immunity deficiencies has been increased throughout 28 years and even now. Because operations of decontamination haven't achieved satisfactory results, the Government shouldn't downgrade the target and left children, who are susceptible to radioactivity, in the affected area. We believe it's unforgivable, and it's sure from a viewpoint of preventive medicine. The Government shouldn't confine the children in the areas of high air dose, but they should implement comprehensive measures to reduce radiation exposure, and to prevent health hazard. And it shouldn't rely solely on decontamination work. For families who want to evacuate a contaminated area, they should be offered practical plans to meet their needs based on their right to evacuate. For families who decided to stay on, a program should be developed to provide periodical recreation and regular medical check-up.

Moreover, the support for evacuees, including the voluntary evacuees, runs very short. And serious issues have come out, such as suicides and solitary deaths in evacuation home, child-abuse, unwanted returning to the original residence, and family breakup. It's an urgent need to investigate the situation, and to provide practical supports to them.

Minister Ishihara said "Ultimately what matter is the money." in his answer to the question from a press after he briefed Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yoshihide Suga, about the meeting with local residents on an interim storage facility.

What we desire as victims of this nuclear disaster is not the money, but the hometown and the life before March 11, 2011. And we do understand it's extremely difficult. From the depth of sadness and agony, what we are asking from the Government are;

- Policies based on their determination to do the best to secure health of people and to preserve the environment
- Minimization of the damage of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster, which has not yet ended
- Maximum preparation for potential following crisis by a big aftershock
- Prevention of recurrence of nuclear disaster elsewhere

However, what they've done is to make damage invisible with utmost effort, instead of preventing it. They've been accelerating diffusion of radioactive materials, and hiding initial radiation exposure and internal exposure. On top of those, the Government adheres the capability of nuclear weapons through restarting nuclear power plants on the Japanese Islands which have entered into the period of great crust change, continuation of nuclear-fuel-cycle planning, and export of nuclear power plants to overseas such as Turkey which is another seismic country in the region. Those activities trample on the sentiment of the victims of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and we must say that it is the policy which has no respect for the lives of the people in the world.

Two days ago, the Abe Cabinet pushed through the Cabinet decision to approve the exercise of the right-of-collective-self-defense which rocks the foundation of constitutionalism and pacifism of the Constitution of Japan. We believe that such militarization of the country, nuclear power plant promotion, and forced toleration of radiation exposure are the Trinity, and we strongly oppose to them all.

To the People of the World,

We would like you to be aware of this serious reality in Japan, and to pay attention to it. We need your help to our activities toward the minimum damage of nuclear power disaster.

July 3, 2014 Fukushima Women against Nukes
(Women of Fukushima Demand End to Nuclear Power)

Translations of Fukui ruling spread "universal values"

July 13, 2014

Ruling banning nuclear reactor restarts translated into English, Korean, Chinese

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201407130025

By HIDEKI MUROYA/ Staff Writer

An anti-nuclear citizens' network has translated a Japanese court's ruling blocking the restarts of two reactors into English, Korean and Chinese to spread the "universal values" of the judgment.

Aileen Mioko Smith, the 64-year-old leader of the Kyoto-based anti-nuclear group Green Action, said she received a number of inquiries from nongovernmental groups in the United States and European embassies in Tokyo about the implications of the Fukui District Court's landmark ruling on May 21.

The court ordered Kansai Electric Power Co. not to restart the two reactors at its Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture, saying that local residents can seek a halt to reactor operations because it is impossible for modern science to predict the scale of possible earthquakes.

Smith said she was asked if the ruling could effectively stop the resumption of the Oi nuclear plant and how it would affect the safety screenings of nuclear plants by the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

She said she was convinced that the ruling could be a "good wake-up call" for operators of nuclear power plants around the world, so she decided to post an English translation of the ruling on the Internet.

Smith contacted Shaun Burnie, a 51-year-old nuclear adviser to Greenpeace Germany, and they commissioned an Australian to translate the ruling into English.

Part of the translated ruling says: "... this court considers national wealth to be the rich land and the people's livelihoods that have taken root there, and that being unable to recover these is the true loss of national wealth."

The ruling also says, "... the operation of nuclear power plants as one means of producing electricity is legally associated with freedom of economic activity and has a lower ranking in the Constitution than the central tenet of personal rights."

After the translation was posted on Greenpeace Japan's website in June, it collected 2,420 "likes" on Facebook within 10 days.

On the night of May 21, Kiyoko Mito, a 78-year-old plaintiff in the lawsuit, asked her Korean and Chinese friends to translate the Fukui District Court's ruling.

Mito wanted the ruling read by as many people as possible in East Asia, which is becoming increasingly reliant on nuclear energy. According to Japan Atomic Industrial Forum Inc., 42 of the 81 nuclear power plants under construction around the world were located in Japan, South Korea, China and Taiwan at the beginning of this year.

Mito asked Kim Bok-nyeo, a 51-year-old translator based in Seoul, to translate the Fukui court ruling. Lawyers representing plaintiffs in lawsuits demanding a suspension of nuclear reactors in South Korea also requested a translation. It took Kim 10 days to work out the Korean version.

The ruling said plaintiffs who live within 250 kilometers of the Oi nuclear plant face real risks, and if that standard is applied to nuclear plants in South Korea, “there is no nuclear plant in South Korea that can operate,” Kim said.

Mito, who once worked as a Japanese language teacher in China, asked a former colleague in the country for a Chinese translation of the ruling.

After reading the ruling in Chinese, Taiwanese lawyer Cai Yaying, who represents plaintiffs demanding a suspension of nuclear plant operations, said Taiwanese courts must also take into account the potential risks to the lives of local residents.

Lawyer Hiroyuki Kawai, who heads a network of plaintiff groups demanding the abolishment of nuclear energy, said it is “extremely rare” for a Japanese court ruling other than in patent cases to be translated into foreign languages.

“The ruling has resonated with people around the world because it declared universal values by placing priority on the lives of people over the merits of nuclear energy,” Kawai said.

The translated versions of the ruling are available at Green Action’s website (<http://www.greenaction-japan.org/>).

Shiga election a clear "no" to rushing restart

July 15, 2014

EDITORIAL: Shiga poll outcome deals heavy blow to Abe’s nuclear agenda

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201407150033>

Voters in Shiga Prefecture gave a sharp “no” to the Abe administration’s rush to restart idled nuclear reactors.

Taizo Mikazuki, 43, who was anointed as the successor to outgoing Shiga Governor Yukiko Kada, won the prefecture’s gubernatorial election on July 13, edging out the ruling coalition-backed Takashi Koyari, a 47-year-old former industry ministry official and adviser to the Abe Cabinet, and the other contenders.

Mikazuki ran on a promise to adopt Kada’s policy of breaking away from Japan’s dependence on nuclear energy.

Initially, Koyari was considered a shoo-in because the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner, New Komeito, won half of the votes cast in the prefecture for the proportional representation segment of the Upper House election last summer. The outcome of the gubernatorial election, therefore, came as a shock for the administration. What happened?

Shiga Prefecture shares a border with Fukui Prefecture, which, with 14 nuclear reactors, boasts more than any other prefecture in Japan. Municipalities in northern parts of Shiga Prefecture are located within 30 kilometers of a nuclear power plant, which means they must prepare their own contingency plans in the event of a nuclear emergency.

The Asahi Shimbun found in exit polls that 70 percent of the respondents who cited nuclear power and energy policy issues as a crucial factor in their voting decisions had cast ballots for Mikazuki. He was also helped by the Abe Cabinet’s controversial decision to formally approve Japan’s exercise of the right to collective self-defense, which came in the middle stage of the election campaign.

Shiga voters clearly raised an objection to the Abe administration’s aggressive drive to force through policy initiatives that sharply divide the nation by taking advantage of the ruling camp’s comfortable majority in both houses of the Diet.

In October, a gubernatorial election will be held in Fukushima Prefecture, which is struggling to clean up the mess left by the nuclear disaster that unfolded in 2011. Then in November, voters in Okinawa Prefecture, which is beset by the heavy burden of playing host to many U.S. military bases, will go to the polls to elect their governor.

Abe’s standing with voters will decline further if he continues ignoring the voices of local communities to push his policy agenda.

The Abe administration plans to bring idled reactors across the nation back online one after another, starting with the Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture. Each of the reactors is expected to be restarted once the Nuclear Regulation Authority confirms its safety in inspections.

Residents of Shiga Prefecture, which would be certainly affected in the event of a nuclear accident, sounded the warning bell about the administration's campaign to jump-start nuclear power generation. The outcome carries a significant meaning.

The nuclear watchdog's confirmation of the safety of nuclear power facilities alone cannot ensure the safety of local residents living near a nuclear power plant.

How can local governments concerned develop an effective and workable plan for evacuations of residents during nuclear emergencies? What kind of system should be established to compensate local residents who have suffered damage from a nuclear accident?

Mikazuki needs to hold talks with the central government and regional electric utilities on these and many other key questions that remain unanswered.

Lake Biwako, which occupies much of Shiga Prefecture, is the primary water source for the entire Kansai region. Pollution of the nation's largest lake would have serious consequences for the Kansai region, which includes Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe.

As the governor of the prefecture with the lake, Mikazuki should work with other local governments in the region and raise the question of whether nuclear reactors really need to be restarted.

Before the Oi nuclear plant was brought back online two years ago, the Union of Kansai Governments, a group of nearly a dozen prefectural and municipal governments, rigorously questioned the safety and necessity of reactor restarts. The union pitted itself against the central government over the issues.

Threatened by the prospect of a possible summer power crunch, however, the local governments had to grudgingly accept the decision to allow Kansai Electric Power Co. to resume operations at the plant.

Since then, people in this country have become more eager to save power. This year, the nation is ready to go through a summer without a single reactor in operation, for the first time since the devastating accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in 2011.

This is clearly time for action based on serious, in-depth debate on whether the lessons from the nuclear catastrophe have been learned in a meaningful way.

--The Asahi Shimbun, July 15

NRA's decision criticised

July 16, 2014

Anti-nuclear power groups criticize NRA

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140716_36.html



Groups opposing nuclear power are criticizing the Nuclear Regulation Authority, after it allowed the Sendai power plant to clear an initial safety hurdle toward restarting.

Eleven members from 5 anti-nuclear groups consisting of members of the public and municipality mayors held a news conference in Tokyo on Wednesday.

Eisuke Naramoto of the Citizens' Commission on Nuclear Energy says the regulator seems to have made a hasty decision even though the investigation into the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant is still not complete.

Naramoto says the authority has not fully examined the Sendai plant operator's safety measures against earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions from technical and scientific viewpoints.

Hiroko Uehara, the Secretary General of Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan, says the municipalities hosting the plants are left with the responsibility to compile an evacuation plan for residents in the event of a nuclear accident. She says it's not possible to come up with sufficient plans to protect people's lives.

The five groups will call on the public to let the NRA know its opinions on the matter during the one-month public consultation period for the draft report, which begins on Thursday.

Some 160 members of civic groups against the Sendai plant's resumption held a rally to protest the regulator's approval in front of its office in Tokyo.

They said the plant should not be restarted, and the regulator is not needed if its aim is to restart plants.

The government is poised to go ahead with its plan to restart nuclear plants.

At a news conference, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga says Japan loses about 40 billion dollars a year without nuclear power. He said a stable and inexpensive energy source is necessary for companies to operate comfortably in the country.

Suga added that Japan will eventually reduce its reliance on nuclear power, but the government will allow plants to resume for now as long as they pass the regulator's safety screenings.

Jul. 16, 2014 - Updated 11:07 UTC

Evacuees between anger and resignation at NRA's OK

July 17, 2014

Fukushima evacuees livid at NRA's decision on Kyushu plant

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201407170058>



Protesters shout out their opposition to restarting reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant during a rally near the Diet Building in Tokyo's Nagatacho district on July 16.
(Takuwa Isayama)

By KEISUKE SATO/ Staff Writer

Residents evacuated because of the Fukushima nuclear disaster were aghast at the decision that would allow reactor restarts at the Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture.

"I am divided between anger and resignation--the anger that I cannot forgive and the resignation that our voice cannot be reached," said 64-year-old Mikio Watanabe, who lives in temporary housing in Kawamata, Fukushima Prefecture.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority said July 16 that the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture's Satsumasendai meet tougher new safety standards.

They are set to be reactivated as early as in October.

The disaster forced the evacuation of more than 150,000 people in Fukushima Prefecture. Many of them, like Watanabe, are still living in temporary housing.

Four months after the onset of the nuclear crisis, Watanabe's wife suffered a mental breakdown. When she returned to the couple's radiation-contaminated home in Kawamata, she doused herself with kerosene and set herself ablaze.

In May 2012, Watanabe filed a lawsuit against Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the plant, claiming it was responsible for his wife's death. He also demanded an apology from both the government and the utility.

But before a ruling could be reached in the landmark case that could force the utility to take responsibility for deaths stemming from the Fukushima accident, the government moved to allow the restart of Japan's idle nuclear reactors.

"The government regards the sufferings of those who were affected by the nuclear power plant accident as someone else's problem," Watanabe said. "You cannot understand how it feels unless you have experienced it. But we should not make future generations pay for our mistakes. I want residents outside Fukushima Prefecture to share this feeling."

Yuya Kamoshita, an evacuee from Iwaki who lives in public housing in Tokyo with his family, was livid with the NRA's decision.

"It's unacceptable to move in the direction of restarting a nuclear power plant without thoroughly considering the instabilities and difficulties being faced by the evacuees," the 45-year-old said.

Kamoshita said his life is in limbo right now as he is not sure if he can remain in his present temporary residence after spring 2016. He worries about where he and his family will go.

Last year, he helped organize a group to lobby the government to make free temporary long-term housing available for the evacuees.

In April, his group collected more than 16,000 signatures and submitted them to the Cabinet Office.

His group has 60 members. Seventy percent of the members are mothers with young children.

"Maintaining two households, (the one we evacuated to) and the family home remaining in Fukushima, is a serious psychological burden," Kamoshita said.

In Tokyo, an anti-nuclear rally was staged by the Sayonara Nukes 10 Million Action Group near the Diet Building on July 16. Some 50 demonstrators turned out hoisting banners and placards reading "Restarts are unthinkable" and other slogans.

Evacues on plant restart

July 17, 2014

Fukushima evacuee criticizes nuclear plant reactivation

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140717p2a00m0na013000c.html>

KAWAMATA, Fukushima -- As the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture advances toward reactivation, a Fukushima nuclear evacuee here is concerned that lessons learned from the Fukushima nuclear disaster are now being forgotten, a concern shared by many in the prefecture.

On July 16, the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) approved the safety measures of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture, paving the way for reactivation of its reactors.

"Have we forgotten that the Fukushima plant was also called safe?" asks Hidekatsu Ouchi, 65. His home in the Fukushima Prefecture town of Kawamata is located in an area where overnight stays are still not allowed due to elevated radiation levels. Holding a picture of his father Saichi, who died in May this year at age 84, Hidekatsu recalled his father's past and their time as evacuees from the nuclear disaster.

Saichi was exposed to radiation from the Hiroshima atomic bomb when he entered the city as a military medic in 1945 to treat the wounded. After the war he returned to his hometown of Kawamata, where he ran a farm. In 2008 he suffered a stroke that left him mostly bedridden and unable to speak. When the 2011 Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster occurred, he was again exposed to the threat of radiation.

Hidekatsu evacuated to a government-rented residence in a relatively low-radiation part of the town, while Saichi was put into a nursing home. In spring 2013, Hidekatsu took his father for a visit to their home for the first time since the disaster. He says he had wanted to allow his father to visit the graves of their ancestors while he was still alive.

In May this year, however, Saichi's condition worsened and he was hospitalized in the city of Fukushima. A few days after Hidekatsu promised him he would take care of their home, Saichi passed away from heart failure.

Before the nuclear disaster, that home had been surrounded by the greenery of nature, but now it is surrounded by piles of black bags of radioactively-contaminated soil.

For three days after Saichi's death, Hidekatsu took his body back to their house and spent time with him there.

"It's a shame that I had to make this scenery be my father's last," said Hidekatsu. He added, "No matter how much they emphasize the safety of a nuclear plant, we should have learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake that nature will exceed that."

Meanwhile, in the city of Satsumasendai, host of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant, on the one hand local business leaders are looking forward to an economic boost from reactivation of the plant, but on the other hand, prefectural residents opposed to reactivation have repeatedly been holding protests against it.

After the NRA's approval of the plant's safety measures on July 16, Hiroyoshi Yamamoto, head of the Satsumasendai chamber of commerce, who also serves as chairman of a pro-nuclear power association in the city, held a press conference where he praised the decision, calling it "a great advance toward reactor reactivation."

The city took an economic blow when the nuclear plant was stopped, and Yamamoto says, "I expect reactivation to contribute to vitalize the local economy and provide a secure source of employment."

Meanwhile, around 30 people gathered in front of the NRA secretariat's local office building near Satsumasendai city hall, demanding the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant's passing of the safety inspection be revoked.

Ryoko Torihara, 65, chairwoman of an association opposing the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant, said, "They used too low of a magnitude for their earthquake standard (in safety calculations)," and also questioned

whether potentially destructive volcanic activity could really be predicted before affecting the plant. "The NRA is not a regulation authority, it is a (nuclear plant) promotional authority," she said.

Farmer Ryuko Sakamoto, 79, came from the nearby city of Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture, to join the protest. "I can't believe the NRA is leaving the formulation of evacuation plans up to municipal governments," he said.

At Tenmonkan, a downtown area of the city of Kagoshima, around 20 people protested reactivation of the plant and passed out fliers pleading their case.

Yoshitaka Mukohara, 57, leader of another anti-nuclear plant group, said, "A number of problems (with the Sendai nuclear plant) are being left unattended. Are people fine with restarting the plant while evacuation plans have yet to be created?"

July 17, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Protests in Tochigi

July 30, 2014

Town picked as candidate for radiation-tainted waste dump, drawing protest

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/07/30/national/town-picked-candidate-radiation-tainted-waste-dump-drawing-protest/#.U9o0RmPi91s>

The government notified a town in Tochigi Prefecture on Wednesday that it has been picked as a candidate site for the final disposal of some of the radiation-tainted waste resulting from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

More than 100 residents in the town, which is called Shioya, gathered in front of the municipal office to express their opposition to the government's proposal.

Mayor Kazuhisa Mikata said the community "clearly" opposes the proposal, adding he had conveyed that message to Senior Vice Environment Minister Shinji Inoue during a meeting in the town earlier on Wednesday.

But Mikata left open the possibility of accepting a detailed government survey of the candidate landfill site in the town, which is located about 150 km north of Tokyo, telling a news conference that "it does not mean we will refuse to hear the government's explanation."

The government has decided to have each affected prefecture dispose of waste tainted by radioactive cesium from the nuclear disaster within the prefecture's own borders. The waste includes things like rice straw, sewage and ash from incinerators.

The government is supposed to build a landfill facility for final disposal in each of the five prefectures that lack the capacity to dispose of such waste at existing facilities, such as Tochigi, Miyagi and Chiba.

In 2012, the Tochigi city of Yaita, which borders Shioya, was selected as a candidate site for final waste disposal. But the government was later forced to reconsider the selection due to fierce local opposition.

In Tokyo, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference that the government intends to "steadily deal with the issue so the disposal of designated waste will proceed smoothly."

Last year, the Environment Ministry finalized a new process of selecting a final disposal site in Tochigi after taking local leaders' opinions into account. The government then selected state-owned land in Shioya, taking into account its distance from communities and water sources.

Designated waste contains more than 8,000 becquerels of radioactive cesium per kilogram. At the end of June, 146,000 tons of such waste was slated for disposal in 12 prefectures including Tokyo.

In January, the government proposed a candidate site in Miyagi Prefecture, the first such action under the government's plan to build waste disposal facilities in the five prefectures. But a local leader has opposed the plan as inappropriate, leaving the matter up in the air.

July 30, 2014

Tochigi town favored as permanent radioactive waste storage site

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140730p2a00m0na010000c.html>



Shioya Mayor Kasuhisa Mikata, right, expresses his disappointment to Deputy Environment Minister Shinji Inoue over the Ministry of the Environment's informal selection of his town as a place to construct a final disposal site for radioactive waste, at Shioya town hall on July 30, 2014. (Mainichi)

The Ministry of the Environment is preparing to use state-owned land in the Tochigi Prefecture town of Shioya to permanently store radioactive waste from the Fukushima nuclear disaster, it has been learned.

The ministry has been searching for a location to construct a facility to store "designated waste" including radioactive materials from the disaster at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. On July 30, Deputy Environment Minister Shinji Inoue visited the Shioya town office and asked Mayor Kazuhisa Mikata to agree to a detailed inspection of the area.

Following the meeting, Mikata stated that he was "opposed to construction" of such a facility but indicated that he would engage in discussions with the ministry.

The ministry is eyeing three hectares of state-owned land in Shioya to construct the storage site, officials say. In a meeting with mayors in Tochigi Prefecture it was earlier agreed that prospective sites would be evaluated on four factors -- their distance from communities, their distance from water resources, the level of vegetation and nature in the area, and the amount of designated waste to be stored. Officials agreed to convert these figures into numerical data to make judgments.

During the meeting on July 30, which was also attended by Tochigi Gov. Tomikazu Fukuda, Inoue explained to Mikata that Shioya had achieved the highest ranking in the evaluation. Mikata responded that the ministry's move was "disappointing." He added that the source of one of Japan's designated 100 remarkable water areas lay nearby.

In a news conference after the meeting, Mikata told reporters, "I conveyed my clear opposition. But I think we should lend an ear with regard the implementation of a detailed survey. I would like to consider the issue after discussions with the Ministry of the Environment."

The designated waste includes straw and incinerated ash with a level of radioactivity of 8,000 becquerels or more per kilogram. In 2012, the ministry named the Tochigi Prefecture city of Yaita as a prospective location to build a permanent storage site, but it did not provide explanations to the town in advance, which resulted in local opposition, sending the ministry's plans back to the drawing board. Later, local officials agreed to settle on a single location in which a detailed survey would be conducted. The ministry had acted swiftly to make a selection. A total of roughly 14,000 tons of designated waste remains in Tochigi Prefecture.

July 30, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

see also :

Town chosen as nuclear waste disposal site

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20140730_21.html

Jul. 30, 2014 - Updated 06:53 UTC+2

Japan's Environment Ministry has chosen a town in Tochigi Prefecture, north of Tokyo, as a possible final disposal site for radioactive waste from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident in 2011.

The ministry needs to create the disposal facilities because storage is reaching capacity in 5 prefectures. The facilities are for sewage sludge, incinerated ash, and other waste contaminated with more than 8,000 becquerels per kilogram of radioactive materials.

On Wednesday, Senior Vice Environment Minister Shinji Inoue visited Shioya Town and told Mayor Kazuhisa Mikata and Tochigi Governor Tomikazu Fukuda of the decision. He said state-owned property in the town was chosen after considering safety.

Inoue asked for the town's cooperation in field surveys, adding that the central government will execute the plan while addressing local concerns.

Town Mayor Mikata expressed regret over the decision. He said he told the government that he strongly

opposes the plan and wants to protect the local environment.

About 50 local residents gathered in front of the town office in protest.

In September 2012, the ministry chose a state-held forest in Yaita City as the prefecture's candidate site. But the plan faced criticism and the ministry was forced to back down and start the selection process over.

Shioya (Tochigi) citizens not happy

July 31, 2014

Shioya residents angry over proposed radioactive waste disposal site

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140731p2a00m0na018000c.html>

SHIOYA, Tochigi -- Residents here gathered in front of the Shioya Town Hall on July 30 to protest the Environment Ministry's announcement the same day that the government was looking to make the town a final disposal site for radioactive waste.

The ministry has been searching for a location to construct a facility to store "designated waste" including radioactive materials from the disaster at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. On July 30, Deputy Environment Minister Shinji Inoue visited the Shioya town office and asked Mayor Kazuhisa Mikata to agree to a detailed inspection of the area.

The ministry is apparently eyeing 3 hectares of state-owned land in Shioya to construct the storage site. The ministry says it picked the site because it had the highest score on a 5-point suitability scale in four categories -- including a lack of local active faults and distance from settlements and water sources.

Just 4 kilometers from the proposed site, however, is the source for Shojinzawa Yusui spring water, one of the "best 100" mineral waters as designated by the government in 1985 and the core of local economic revitalization efforts. Mayor Mikata, who is also opposed to the disposal site, snapped at Inoue during their July 30 meeting, "Haven't you even studied what we're doing to reinvigorate this town?" after the deputy minister asked the mayor to conduct a detailed study of the disposal plan.

Meanwhile, the 76-year-old chair of the town agricultural committee said, "The reputation of our produce will suffer, and the market for them will narrow." The head of the local promotion committee for a district downstream from the proposed site lamented, "We won't start to see any health effects (from the waste)

for 20 or 30 years. I don't want our descendants to face that kind of worry, so I'm opposed to the disposal site."

The designated waste includes straw and incinerated ash with a level of radioactivity of 8,000 becquerels or more per kilogram. In 2012, the ministry named the Tochigi Prefecture city of Yaita as a prospective location to build a permanent storage site, but it did not provide explanations to the town in advance, which resulted in local opposition and ended up forcing the ministry to start planning again from scratch.

After his visit to Shioya, Inoue told reporters at a news conference, "Asking the town to do a study on the site doesn't mean that the site will definitely be built there," and added that he would carefully and patiently explain the disposal plan to local residents to win their understanding. Environment Minister Nobuteru Ishihara is scheduled to visit the area on July 31.

Nukes can only exist "at somebody's expense"

June 10, 2014

Fukushima No. 1 schoolteacher says disaster lessons still unlearned

by Yugo Hirano
Kyodo

FUKUSHIMA – Retired schoolteacher Hidefumi Owada feels helpless whenever he returns to his deserted home in Namie, Fukushima Prefecture.

Adding to his bitterness, he feels the anti-nuclear activism he was involved in for more than four decades proved futile.

After graduating from university, Owada was assigned to teach social science at a junior high school in Kitakata, Fukushima Prefecture, in 1956. He happened to find a book at a local bookstore which, though supportive of nuclear power, pointed out that it was impossible to secure radioactive waste or to rule out radiation leaks.

Owada was transferred to a junior high school in Tomioka, in the Hamadori coastal district of Fukushima Prefecture, in 1961. He remained at schools in that area before retiring at the age of 54.

Hamadori became home to nuclear power plants because of overwhelming local support. The plants offered employment, and the central government promoted them as required investments for the national economy

Subsidies and grants meant Hamadori received well appointed public facilities and workers found jobs.

Atomic power plants appeared to represent development.

Stunned by what he was reading, however, Owada got more and more involved in the anti-nuclear movement. He was convinced that nuclear power plants represented a sacrifice by local residents. After retirement, he became a farmer and at that time he came to head a local anti-nuclear group.

The group would meet Tokyo Electric Power Co. almost every month to discuss safety concerns. But the utility refused to undertake costly safety measures such as moving emergency diesel power generators from the basement to the second floor.

He believes this failure by Tepco to adopt appropriate safety measures “invited the accident.”

Owada says his activism draws on an example set by one of his relatives. During the Meiji Era (1868-1912), a human rights movement blossomed especially in Fukushima and Kochi prefectures. Nakae Kariyado (1854-1907) was one of the leaders of the movement in Fukushima, and Owada is one of his descendants.

Kariyado was arrested on three occasions and was even tortured by police. But later he got the chance to influence public life when he became a member of the prefectural assembly.

When police arrived to arrest Kariyado for the first time in 1882, for organizing protests with farmers ordered to work on road construction, he made them wait outside his home and wrote this message for his followers: “Freedom! Oh freedom! I will die with you.”

Owada drew strength from this.

“I was encouraged by the fact that I have an ancestor who was committed to his beliefs,” he said. “I decided to carry on with anti-nuclear campaigning as my own civil rights movement.”

In 1964, the Atomic Energy Commission decided that areas within a certain distance of a nuclear reactor should be declared non-residential, and should be surrounded by a low-population zone. In addition, the commission said power plants could not be built within a certain distance of major population centers.

Owada believes those principles in effect acknowledged the dangers posed by nuclear power facilities and therefore discriminated against villagers by allowing plants to be built in low-population areas.

"Nuclear power is an industry that exists at somebody's expense, and it neglects human rights," he said.

"Nuclear plants are uncontrollable monsters"

August 4, 2014

Godzilla and a monstrous form of energy

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20140804p2a00m0na001000c.html>

The popular U.S. film "Godzilla" has stormed to the top of the box office in Japan, where it was released on July 25.

"Godzilla," as many readers will know, was originally a Japanese film, focusing on a monster resurrected by hydrogen bombs. Though it is simply entertainment, the Japanese version of the work reflects people's distrust in nuclear policy.

The U.S. version, which depicts a nuclear power station accident, is highly suggestive. The film ends after Godzilla disappears into the sea with a subtitle asking if he is a savior.

We could view Godzilla as atomic energy itself. In that case, I think we would have to answer that Godzilla is no savior. In my view, Japan must abandon the use of atomic energy.

We are approaching the Aug. 6 and 9 anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. People in these atomic-bombed cities are still calling for nuclear disarmament, but across the world, their calls have been blocked by reality.

In a speech in Prague in the spring of 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama declared that he would pursue a world without nuclear weapons. However, two sticky issues remain: the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

Nuclear powers' egotism has hindered moves to totally ban nuclear tests. The United States, a superpower, has refused to ratify the CTBT because it is reluctant to accept restrictions that would prevent the country from maintaining and renewing nuclear arms it possesses.

China is paying close attention to U.S. moves, while India is paying close attention to Chinese and U.S. moves. Pakistan is paying close attention to India's behavior. Since most nuclear powers are behaving like this (Russia, Britain and France have ratified the CTBT), the pact has not come into force and still has no binding power under international law, although 183 countries have signed it.

At the same time, circumstances surrounding the FMCT have shed light on fundamental problems involving moves toward a ban on the production of fissile material. The FMCT aims to prohibit the production and transfer of highly enriched uranium and plutonium. However, the United States, which would have huge influence in enforcing such a ban, is not enthusiastic about enforcing the treaty because the pact would prohibit U.S. forces from operating their nuclear-powered submarines.

Japan, one of the proponents of the treaty, also has a serious problem. Tokyo has failed to squarely confront the issue of whether the plutonium it possesses should be an exception to the ban. In other words, Japan sticks to the position that only nuclear weapons -- and not nuclear materials for non-military use -- should be subject to regulation under the treaty.

Japan and Australia are leading the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) involving 12 non-nuclear powers. This past spring, foreign ministers of the 12 countries participating in the NPDI held a conference in Hiroshima and agreed to continue their efforts toward nuclear disarmament. However, their agreement is far from convincing, because they failed to clarify the causes of the deadlock in enforcing the CTBT and FMCT, pacts that would lead to nuclear disarmament. This is because the members tried to avoid adversely affecting the United States' interests, while Tokyo wants the others to overlook Japan's possession of plutonium intended for use at its nuclear plants.

It is not an option for Japan to ignore all agreements in the international community and walk down a path toward nuclear armament. The nation, then, has only two choices -- completely abandon nuclear energy or continue to meander over its nuclear energy policy by sticking to the opportunistic position of differentiating between nuclear materials for peaceful purposes and those for military use.

Abandoning nuclear power generation was previously viewed in Japan as absurd idealism. However, following the March 11, 2011 outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear crisis, this is no longer the case. Rather, a growing number of people view it unrealistic to coexist with nuclear power.

Nuclear plants are uncontrollable monsters. Now is the time for Japan to withdraw even from the peaceful use of nuclear energy. (By Takao Yamada, Expert Senior Writer)

"For us, every day is March 11"

August 9, 2014

Fukushima Pref. students collect anti-nuke signatures in Nagasaki

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140809p2a00m0na024000c.html>

NAGASAKI -- As Nagasaki marked the 69th anniversary of the atomic bombing of the city on Aug. 9, two Fukushima Prefecture students chosen as high school peace ambassadors joined other students in the city to collect signatures for a petition against nuclear weapons to be sent to the United Nations.

One of them was 16-year-old Rin Ishii, of Odaka Technical High School in Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture. Ishii lives in temporary housing, as her family's home is only around 15 kilometers from the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, in a zone where overnight stays are not allowed. She was still in junior-high when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck on March 11, 2011, triggering a nuclear disaster.

After the meltdowns at the plant, Ishii and her family evacuated to the village of Nishigo near the border with Tochigi Prefecture, where they lived for around eight months before moving into temporary housing.

Ishii enrolled in her current school in April last year. A temporary building for the school was constructed on a soccer field, and although the temporary school building is not well equipped, Ishii continues to work hard at her studies.

On Aug. 6 she visited Nagasaki for the first time, where she heard the story of 79-year-old atomic bomb survivor Sakue Shimohira. When the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Shimohira was around 800 meters from the hypocenter, and she lost family. Ishii realized the importance of keeping such stories alive.

"Keeping them from fading from people's minds is important. Likewise, I want to pass on stories of Fukushima," she said.

Also chosen as a peace ambassador was Ayumi Honda, 17, of Fukushima National College of Technology in Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture. Her family's home lies around 47 kilometers from the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant, and even now, she and her family are careful about radiation -- they don't hang clothes outside to dry, and they drink store-bought water.

When Honda was a junior high school student, she went on a tour of a facility advertising the Fukushima plant. The guide there talked about how well-protected, safe and clean it was as a source of energy, so Honda was all the more shocked when the nuclear disaster occurred. For around three weeks, she lived as an evacuee with relatives in Yokohama before returning to Iwaki, where rows of temporary houses still stand near her home.

"For people outside the disaster-hit areas, March 11 comes only once a year, but for us, every day is March 11," she says.

After the disaster, Honda learned about the issues surrounding nuclear plants, such as nuclear waste disposal and the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. She participated in a gathering held by high school students in Nagasaki, where she asked them, "In Fukushima Prefecture, many people live in fear of harmful effects to their health (from radiation). Nuclear plants and nuclear bombs share the same root, don't you think?"

August 09, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Unacceptable interference

Overblog has just started adding publicity to their site. I have no way of stopping them from doing so.

I find this totally unacceptable.

I am currently looking for an alternative solution.

Please try and be a bit patient and ignore the ads.

OG. webmaster of fukushima-is-still-news (aug.9, 2014)

To my readers

I am currently trying to start a new blog on wordpress.

Please try this new address:

<http://www.fukushima-is-still-news.com>

New address of the blog of fukushima-is-still-news

I have been posting articles on my new blog.
Please switch to:

www.fukushima-is-still-news.com

Can restrictions on hate speech be used against anti-nukes?

August 31, 2014

Anti-nuclear protesters fear that restrictions on hate speech will also target them

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201408310014

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

As anti-nuclear demonstrators rallied in front of the Diet building on Aug. 30, many were troubled by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's discussions on restricting hate speech, fearing that a clampdown could also be used to silence their dissent.

"We do not interrupt traffic. We do not break through the cordon of police, either. Our demonstrations are different from just generating noise or making hate speeches. The government should hear the voices of the public," said Tsuyoshi Mizuno, 67, a taxi driver from Matsudo, Chiba Prefecture.

Mizuno has participated in the weekly anti-nuclear demonstrations around the Diet building and the nearby prime minister's office since the March 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The protesters' concerns apparently stemmed from the discussions held by a project team of the LDP on Aug. 28, which met for the first time.

The team was set up in response to a request from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to consider possible measures to restrict hate speech, prompted by recent demonstrations in Tokyo and Osaka and across the country where racial invectives were made against ethnic Koreans living in Japan.

In the discussion, Lower House lawmaker Katsuei Hirasawa, who serves as the project team leader, said, "By looking into actual conditions (of hate speeches), we want to consider whether the government can deal (with them) under the current laws or if new laws are needed."

Participants discussed possible measures to restrict not only hate speech but also demonstrations around the Diet building.

On Aug. 30, the rally organizer estimated about 7,000 protesters opposing the restart of idled nuclear reactors gathered at the front gate of the Diet building.

In conjunction with voices from loudspeakers, they shouted, "We oppose the restart (of the nuclear reactors)! We also oppose the restrictions on demonstrations."

Sachie Masuda, 44, a temporary worker from Tokyo's Sugunami Ward, said, "The LDP is trying to control the means for people to express their opinions."

While holding her daughter's hand, an elementary school first-grader, she waved a small yellow flag that read, "Goodbye to nuclear power."

"If we express our opinions and, as a result, are clamped down (by the government), we will not be able to say what we want to say," she added.

Emiko Mizuno, 30, a company employee from Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture, was holding up a sign that said, "Don't crack down on freedom of expression."

"I feel anger at and fear over the fact that, in the ruling party, there are people who cannot distinguish sound criticism against the government from the acts of racial discrimination," she said.

Currently, rallies held around the Diet building with loudspeakers are restricted under the law to regulate noise in certain public places. Even if the acts are noisy, however, few demonstrators have been arrested so far.

In the Aug. 28 discussions, however, LDP policy chief Sanae Takaichi said, "When I am in the LDP headquarters building (located near the Diet building), there are times that I cannot concentrate on my work for many hours."

Another participant asked, "Is it possible to restrict anti-nuclear demonstrations under the law (to restrict hate speech)?"

Ikuo Gono, associate professor of international political science at Takachiho University, who is well versed in hate speech issues, told The Asahi Shimbun that the anti-nuclear protesters are controlling themselves so that their rallies do not turn into riots.

"The participants are not making remarks or taking acts that are discriminatory against certain races or are threatening certain people's right to exist," Gono said. "They are completely different from those who are making hate speeches."

Gono, who has written a book titled "Demo towa nanika?" (What are demonstrations?), added, "If the government restricts protests, which are based on the freedom of expression, by using restrictions on hate speech, it could endanger democracy. It will be an extremely dangerous move."

(Katsuhei Kawamura and Hiroshi Kai contributed to this article.)

Toward a nuclear-free world

August 11, 2014

EDITORIAL: Japan must pursue a path to a nuclear-free world

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201408110020>

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki this month, both of which marked the 69th anniversaries of the atomic bombings. In the ceremonies in both cities, he emphasized determination to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

However, it seems that the gap between Abe and the cities that were struck by atomic bombs has increased since last year.

In a meeting with Abe in Hiroshima, 85-year-old hibakusha Yukio Yoshioka said, "(The Cabinet's approval of the exercise of the right to collective self-defense) will make Japan a country that repeats its (past) mistake and can wage a war."

Miyako Jodai, 75, who served as the representative of atomic bomb survivors in the ceremony in Nagasaki, said, "I want the government not to forget or deny the sufferings of atomic bomb survivors."

They apparently demanded that Abe withdraw the Cabinet's approval of the exercise of the right to collective self-defense.

DIFFERENT FROM DESIRES

There are also other causes of concern.

One is the exports of nuclear power generation infrastructure to emerging countries. Another is negotiations to conclude a nuclear power agreement with India, which has conducted nuclear tests without joining the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Both could lead to nuclear proliferation. The Abe administration also plans to maintain the policy of removing plutonium from spent nuclear fuels and reusing it in nuclear power plants.

After the March 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima Prefecture, the future of nuclear power generation remains unclear. In addition, Japan already holds stocks of more than 40 tons of plutonium whose use has yet to be decided. Anti-nuclear groups in Japan and abroad suspect that Japan has the intention of arming itself with nuclear weapons.

Why are the moves of the government of A-bombed Japan so different from the desires for anti-nuclear policies?

In cities that were devastated by the atomic bombs, Abe asked the people to understand the Cabinet's approval of the exercise of the right to collective self-defense by repeatedly saying, "It is to protect the lives and livelihoods of the people."

The government's basic stance is as follows: China's military power is conspicuously increasing. North Korea is not halting its nuclear and missile development. The security environment surrounding Japan is becoming harsher. Therefore, the series of policies is preparation for a variety of threats.

CONTRADICTIONS OF POLICIES

It is said that in Northeast Asia, nuclear deterrence is effective because some countries continued to possess nuclear weapons even after the end of the Cold War. Therefore, the government's policy of depending on the U.S. nuclear umbrella is unshakable.

If concerned countries only rely on nuclear weapons, however, the era of risking catastrophe by nuclear war will continue. China, Russia and North Korea will heighten their alarm against the strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance based on nuclear weapons. As a result, "the lives and the livelihoods of the people" will be endangered.

However, the Abe administration is taking no action to drastically minimize the role of nuclear weapons and positively reduce the risk of the nuclear age.

There are many cases that run counter to nuclear disarmament. One is the missile defense (MD) system, which is being jointly developed by Japan and the United States at present.

The United States puts expectations on Japan's exercise of the right to collective self-defense on the grounds that the exercise will lead to the strengthening of the MD system. That is because the Abe administration says that it plans to make it possible for Japan to shoot down ballistic missiles targeting the U.S. mainland or warships under the interpretation of the Constitution.

Irrespective of whether it is technologically possible to shoot down the missiles, China and Russia are opposed to the strengthening of the MD system, saying that their nuclear deterrence will be weakened. China could also use the strengthening of the MD system as an excuse to increase its nuclear capabilities in order to break the defense network of Japan and the United States.

Abe also supports the possibility of the Self-Defense Forces sweeping for mines in the Strait of Hormuz. But the potential to do so could irritate Iran and adversely affect multinational talks to halt the country's nuclear development. As a result, Japan could lose its influence on Iran.

It is important to take the threats seriously. But it is impossible to continue the vicious cycle of "power against power" forever. What policies will the Abe administration take to prevent the acceleration of nuclear power expansion and nuclear proliferation and stabilize the international society and Northeast

Asia? The policies are unclear. Therefore, people in cities that were victimized by the atomic bombs are feeling anxiety.

It is Japan's role to show a vision of steadily promoting arms control of the entire Northeast Asian region and stabilizing it.

TRUST AND DIALOGUE

In the Hiroshima Peace Declaration, Mayor Kazumi Matsui called for the establishment of "a new security system based on trust and dialogue."

In the world, the Obama administration is losing its centripetal force, and its relations with Russia have cooled due to the Ukrainian situation. China's maritime advances have intensified friction with neighboring countries. The road to the "new security system based on trust and dialogue" is steep. But is it just a dream?

The Nagasaki Peace Declaration this year again advocated an idea of establishing "nuclear-weapon-free zones." In the proposal, Japan and the Korean Peninsula are denuclearized, and nuclear powers promise not to attack the areas with nuclear weapons.

The Japanese government is negative to the idea on the grounds that relations of trust, which serve as a prerequisite, do not exist in the areas partly because North Korea has repeatedly conducted nuclear tests. North Korea counters the view, saying that what is a threat is the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Relations of trust will be established through dialogue. To realize the nuclear-weapon-free zones, Japan should first show its intentions to set up the zones and leave the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Then, it should urge the United States to accept the zones. After that, showing a joint goal, Japan should strongly urge North Korea to take part in the negotiations.

The improvement of relations with China is also indispensable. A council of experts from five countries in the Asia and Pacific region, including former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, asked Japan and China to hold a summit meeting in its proposal compiled in Hiroshima.

It is not easy to untangle a thread. Unless there is a dialogue, however, nothing will start.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Aug. 10

Third anniversary of anti nuke tents in Tokyo

September 12, 2014

Human chain formed to mark 3rd anniversary of anti-nuclear protest tents

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201409120055>

An anti-nuclear citizens group held a rally Sept. 11 to mark the third anniversary of the establishment of protest tents in front of the industry ministry.

According to event organizers, about 800 people formed a "human chain" around the ministry building in Tokyo's Kasumigaseki district. They voiced their opposition to the planned restart of nuclear reactors as well as the continuation of nuclear power plant operations.

Before the rally, supporters held a news conference in front of the tents.

"Here is a symbol of anti-nuclear activity, so we want to value it so as not to isolate it," said writer Satoshi Kamata.

Also present was writer Keiko Ochiai, who told reporters, "For us, (the tents) are a symbol of indignation and lamentation, as well as of hope for tomorrow."



Writer Keiko Ochiai, second from right, and other supporters hold a news conference in front of anti-nuclear protest tents in Tokyo's Kasumigaseki district on Sept. 11.
(Katsuhei Kawamura)

No way of including residents' opinions on restart

September 11, 2014

Editorial: Move to restart reactors without sufficient debate a huge mistake

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20140911p2a00m0na003000c.html>

The Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) has approved a screening document giving the No. 1 and 2 reactors at Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai Nuclear Power Plant a pass under new screening standards -- a first in Japan.

The power company is now stepping up efforts to gain local consent to restart the reactors. But many issues have been left unaddressed, and we cannot accept reactivation without proper debate on these issues.

Two months before the screening document was adopted, the Mainichi Shimbun proposed two minimum conditions for restarting the reactors: preparing a way to curb damage to residents based on lessons learned from the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and having the government outline a roadmap for

eliminating dependence on nuclear power and clarify where the reactivation of nuclear reactors is positioned within the nation's overall energy strategy.

This month the government sent workers to Kagoshima Prefecture, among other areas, to help formulate evacuation plans that would be implemented in the event of a nuclear accident. It is also considering making power companies present maintenance plans for aging reactors and urging utilities to reach a decision on whether to decommission or extend the life of their reactors.

But **these measures have come too late, and even if they guarantee the effectiveness of evacuation plans, we still have no outline of how the nation can free itself from reliance on nuclear power.**

The government says it plans to proceed with restarting nuclear power plants that have passed NRA screening. But it has not explained how it plans to obtain the consent it needs from local bodies for the plants to go into operation.

Under current rules, power companies must obtain consent from prefectural governments, as well as cities, towns or villages, where the nuclear power plants are located. But that leaves restarting nuclear reactors entirely in the hands of power companies and local bodies.

Kagoshima Gov. Yuichiro Ito has asked the government to state in writing why it is necessary to reactivate the Sendai plant's nuclear reactors. In doing so he has expressed the position that the government bears responsibility for restarting the reactors. The government intends to comply, but this must not end up a mere ceremony.

It is feared that if nuclear power plants are not restarted, then imports of fossil fuels will be pushed up, which could negatively affect the economy. But the risk of accidents that goes hand in hand with reactivation of nuclear reactors remains. So why are officials deciding to restart these reactors? Are we perfectly prepared for any accident that could occur?

The government has a responsibility to spend time explaining the issue to the public, deepen discussion, and reflect this in its policies.

When proceeding to gain consent for reactivation from local bodies, **the government must deeply respect the opinions not only of the municipalities where the reactors are located, but also those within a 30-kilometer radius of the nuclear power plant, where evacuation plans must be prepared.**

In July, the municipal assembly of the city of Aira, which lies within 30 kilometers of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant, expressed opposition to restarting the plant's reactors, stating that residents felt uneasy about evacuation plans. It approved a document calling for the reactors to be decommissioned. In the Kagoshima Prefecture city of Ichikikushikino, meanwhile, more than half of the city's residents signed a petition opposing reactivation.

However, as is the case with the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant and many other nuclear facilities, there exists no mechanism enabling the opinions of residents in these neighboring municipalities to be reflected in decisions on whether or not nuclear reactors should be restarted.

Municipalities hosting nuclear power plants tend to favor reactivation due to the strong economic ties they have to those plants. If the government and power companies are hoping they can restrict consent for activation of nuclear power plants to as small a sphere as possible, then they are making a huge mistake.

September 11, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

16,000 protestors in Tokyo



September 24, 2014

16,000 people gather at Tokyo park to protest against restart of nuclear plants

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140924p2a00m0na021000c.html>

About 16,000 people took part in an anti-nuclear rally at Kameido Central Park in Tokyo's Koto Ward on Sept. 23, demanding that plans to reactivate the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, be scrapped, its organizer said.

The rally, "Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants," had originally been scheduled to take place at Yoyogi Park in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, but the venue for the event was hastily rearranged due to an outbreak of dengue fever there.

On Sept. 10, the Nuclear Regulation Authority approved the final version of its screening report for the Sendai nuclear power station -- a precondition for reactivating two nuclear reactors at the plant. Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe, one of the organizers of the rally, said to the crowd, "We must raise the voice of national resistance." Yoshitaka Mukohara, who heads "Han-Genpatsu Kagoshima Net" (Anti-Nuclear Kagoshima Network), said, "Let's dissuade them from reactivating the nuclear plant without giving in an inch."

After the rally, participants took to the streets, holding up placards that read: "We don't need nuclear power!" Fuyuko Takei, a 31-year-old company employee from Tokyo's Nerima Ward, took part in the rally with her 3-year-old son and 1-year-old daughter. "The Fukushima accident is not someone else's problem. There's no way that (the Sendai nuclear plant) can be reactivated," she said.

September 24, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

16,000 protestors in Tokyo (2)

September 24, 2014

16,000 activists turn out in Tokyo in outcry against nuclear power plants

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201409240056

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Even though reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant have cleared final safety checks, more than 10,000 anti-nuclear activists at a park in Tokyo's Koto Ward on Sept. 23 pledged to continue their opposition.

According to Citizens' Committee for the 10 Million People's Petition to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants, which organized the protest, about 16,000 activists rallied at Kameido Chuo Park on the autumn equinox national holiday.

"I want Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to pledge that the central government will abandon nuclear power plants in the nation," said writer Hisae Sawachi, who is a member of the group along with Nobel Prize-winning author Kenzaburo Oe.

"We do not have any other avenue than to march and voice our opinions together, but we should continue to fight vigorously."

Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture formally cleared tougher safety checks by the Nuclear Regulation Authority on Sept. 10. The NRA approval is the first since the new safety standards were established following the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011.

The plant operator must submit additional paperwork to the NRA that includes construction plans detailing equipment design as the next step to resuming operations of the plant's No. 1 and No. 2 reactors, which is not expected until early next year.

"There are pessimistic observations and misgivings that the strong and unequivocal national sentiments against nuclear power plants that we saw shortly after the March 11, 2011, disaster may be waning," Oe said at the rally.

Oe speculated that this has emboldened the Abe administration to press forward strongly with its pro-nuclear policies.

"We should proceed with (our anti-nuclear protests) in a determined manner," he said.

Protest against Sendai restart

September 29, 2014

7,500 rally against restart of Kagoshima nuclear plant

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201409290044

By HIROKI KOIKE/ Staff Writer

KAGOSHIMA--About 7,500 people from across Japan gathered here on Sept. 28 to protest the planned restart of two reactors that have cleared final safety checks at the Sendai nuclear power plant.

According to event organizers, the rally at Tenmonkan Koen park was one of the largest protests organized in Kagoshima Prefecture.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority on Sept. 10 formally cleared the reactors at the plant in Satsuma-Sendai, the nuclear watchdog's first approval under stricter safety standards established after the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011.

Kyushu Electric Power Co., the Sendai plant's operator, must still obtain consent from local governments located around the plant before firing up the reactors.

The Sept. 28 rally was hosted by a committee consisting of 90 or so citizens groups in Kagoshima Prefecture.

Naoto Kan, who was prime minister when the Fukushima nuclear disaster unfolded, gave a speech at the protest.

"It is essential to have the city and town governments within a 30-kilometer radius of the plant make clear whether they agree to the restart of the reactors," said Kan, who has engaged in anti-nuclear activities since stepping down as prime minister in September 2011.

Local governments within the area are also required to compile evacuation plans for residents in the event of a nuclear accident.

"I will fully support the movement to stop the planned resumption of the reactors," Kan told the participants.

Also present was Chikako Nishiyama, a 66-year-old former assembly member of the village of Kawauchi, Fukushima Prefecture, whose residents were all temporarily forced to evacuate following the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

"I want (people) to know about the reality of Fukushima Prefecture," Nishiyama told reporters. "If a precedent is set at the Sendai nuclear power plant, it would encourage a resumption of other nuclear plants. I want to head off the move at any cost."

After the rally, the protesters marched through the heart of Kagoshima city, voicing their opposition to the reactor restarts and demanding an end to nuclear power generation.

Currently, all of Japan's nuclear reactors are shut down.

We should not accept reactor restarts

September 30, 2014

Former Tokai mayor says Japan is sleep-walking toward further nuclear disasters

Kyodo

Speaking to around 350 people at a public meeting there Sunday, Tatsuya Murakami said the nation glossed over the Tokai disaster and upheld a "myth" about the safety of nuclear power.

"Japan was caught up in a safety myth, that a serious nuclear accident would not happen in this country," he said.

The accident at a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in the village occurred on Sept. 30, 1999. It left two people dead.

He said the safety myth and failure to clarify exactly why the accident took place led to mistakes that resulted in the Fukushima debacle.

The accident in Tokai, about 130 km northeast of Tokyo, killed two employees of operator JCO Co. and exposed more than 600 residents to radiation. The critical state lasted around 20 hours, through the next day.

Six JCO employees and the company itself were faulted for the accident. Workers using buckets had poured too much uranium solution into a processing tank, which led to a nuclear fission chain reaction. Focusing on the use of buckets and calling it "an unexpected problem," the government and the nuclear industry placed the responsibility for the accident solely on JCO.

The former mayor said what officials should have done was "determine the problems of a nuclear-dependent society as a whole."

Murakami stepped down as mayor a year ago after 16 years in office and now works as a co-representative of Mayors for a Nuclear Free Japan, a body that comprises nearly 100 former and current mayors who campaign to phase out nuclear power.

When the Tokai accident occurred, the local and central governments seemed unable to take the lead in responding. Murakami stepped in, taking a unilateral decision to evacuate residents within 350 meters of the JCO compound.

After the Fukushima disaster, the then-government of the Democratic Party of Japan declared that the nation would aim to phase out nuclear power by 2040.

But the current government, under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of the Liberal Democratic Party, decided this year to support the continued use of nuclear power and upheld commitment to the nation's spent-fuel recycling projects.

"To some extent, the DPJ government was reflecting public opinion. But the Abe government has refused to hear what the people say," Murakami said. "In such circumstances I fear another nuclear disaster may happen."

Another speaker addressing the meeting was Keiko Oizumi, a former worker at a factory near the JCO plant. She and her husband filed for compensation against JCO and parent company Sumitomo Mining Co. for damage to their health, but in 2010 the Supreme Court threw the case out.

Oizumi spoke of how she sometimes gets to meet evacuees from Fukushima. She also described how she still sees mental-health specialists.

"I have suffered general malaise, depression, sleeplessness and other symptoms, and I still see psychiatrists," Oizumi said. "I always think I could have lived a normal life if it were not for nuclear power. . . . The JCO accident completely changed my life."

She said she feels the pain of Fukushima evacuees as her own.

"People do not bleed if they are exposed to radiation, but they bleed in their hearts," she said.

Oizumi urged supporters to take their demands to those in power.

"We should not accept reactor restarts," she said. "Now is our only chance to terminate nuclear power."

Koizumi & Hosokawa call for nuclear-free Japan

September 30, 2014

Ex-prime ministers call for nuclear-free Japan in rock festival

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140930p2g00m0dm042000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Two former prime ministers who have become antinuclear campaigners in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima crisis joined a rock festival event in Tokyo on Monday that brought together musicians opposed to nuclear power.

"We must create a country where nuclear power generation is zero. Let's develop our country without nuclear power," Junichiro Koizumi, a charismatic former leader, shouted from the stage in front of about 2,500 people and received applause.

Koizumi also told reporters later that an "unexpected event could happen anytime" at nuclear power plants in Japan, touching on the recent volcanic eruption of Mt. Ontake in central Japan, which occurred without warning signs and killed a number of climbers.

"In Japan, earthquakes, tsunami and volcanic eruptions could occur in various locations. It's a country not allowed to have nuclear power plants," he said.

Morihiro Hosokawa, another former prime minister, said he felt hope in antinuclear campaigning as he saw the eyes of youths at the festival "twinkling."

The rock event, organized by renowned Japanese musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, has been held annually since 2012.

Meanwhile, Koizumi and Hosokawa denied having intention to become involved in the Oct. 26 gubernatorial election in Fukushima Prefecture, home to the crisis-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co.

"People recognize (the importance of) breaking away from nuclear power. It will not be an issue that will be contested (in the election)," Hosokawa said.

All of the 48 commercial reactors in Japan are currently offline, but the government is pushing for the resumption of reactors that have cleared a set of new safety requirements introduced in the wake of the Fukushima accident.

September 30, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

A disturbing piece of art

October 14, 2014

Tohoku Electric Power kicks up a stink about art display at publicity hall

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201410140032>

By HIDEAKI ISHIBASHI/ Senior Staff Writer

SENDAI--A solitary bulging black sandbag, a sprinkling of dirt on a solar panel and a dosimeter: As art installations go, the work on display at a venue here smacked more of a statement than anything else. And it got the attention of Tohoku Electric Power Co., operator of the Green Plaza hall where the exhibit could be seen by passers-by.

The utility uses the hall to publicize its activities, as well as providing a venue for the public to mount exhibitions.

Tohoku Electric asked for the work to be temporarily removed on grounds that people looking in from the street might regard it as suspicious.

The dirt is from Fukushima Prefecture, site of the 2011 nuclear disaster. It has already been decontaminated of radiation. The installation was created by Takashi Murakami, who is also an associate professor of art education at Miyagi University of Education.

He should not be confused with the pop artist of the same name, who is internationally famous and has also been involved in charity efforts to assist victims of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

Artists from Japan and Canada organized an exhibition titled "Power To The People" to be held at the Green Plaza from Oct. 7 to 19. Murakami and the other artists said they wanted the exhibition to make visitors think about the future of energy from a neutral standpoint.

The artists chose the Green Plaza for their venue for the simple reason it is operated by an electric power company in the area most severely affected by the 2011 natural disasters.

"I tried to express the current situation in Fukushima where sand bags filled with dirt from decontamination work are stacked up everywhere," Murakami said.

According to Daisuke Takeya, an artist based in Toronto who helped organize the exhibition, Green Plaza officials asked that Murakami's work be removed because "people who pass by the front of the hall will think it was something suspicious." The request was made as soon as the installation was set up on the evening of Oct. 6. His account was verified by Tatsuya Minamihaba, the head of Green Plaza.

Takeya and others refused, citing their freedom of expression.

The next day, when the exhibition was scheduled to open, shutters were lowered over the window of the hall facing the sidewalk as well as the entrance to the hall.

Takeya proposed placing fence-like equipment around the work, but Green Plaza officials insisted that it be moved to another room and the door to the new site be kept closed. They also said no notice of what was on display would be placed outside of the room.

Further discussions followed. To compromise, it was finally decided to place a curtain over the entrance to the other room so the work would not be visible from the street, but to allow for the display of a label of the artist and work name in the main hall.

The exhibition finally was opened to the public on Oct. 10, three days behind schedule.

In response to an inquiry from The Asahi Shimbun, Minamihaba explained why the work was moved and said, "It did not match the policy of managing the Green Plaza in order to provide citizens with a place for enrichment and relaxation."

He denied any connection between the decision and the nuclear accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

"We did not sufficiently confer beforehand with exhibition organizers about what kind of work Murakami was planning to display," Minamihaba said.

Takeya said, "We did hold a sense of mistrust because the public could not see the exhibition for three days. But in the end we are grateful for the understanding shown by Tohoku Electric Power. We hope it will continue to provide venues for the public to think about energy."

Murakami said, "Art is by nature multifaceted, so it can be not only comforting to people, but also disgusting to some. Tohoku Electric Power overreacted."



Takashi Murakami's art installation was moved to a different room before an exhibition at Tohoku Electric Power Co.'s Green Plaza was opened to the public.
(Hideaki Ishibashi)

Antinuke art

October 14, 2014

Tohoku Electric Power kicks up a stink about art display at publicity hall

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201410140032>

By HIDEAKI ISHIBASHI/ Senior Staff Writer

SENDAI--A solitary bulging black sandbag, a sprinkling of dirt on a solar panel and a dosimeter: As art installations go, the work on display at a venue here smacked more of a statement than anything else. And it got the attention of Tohoku Electric Power Co., operator of the Green Plaza hall where the exhibit could be seen by passers-by.

The utility uses the hall to publicize its activities, as well as providing a venue for the public to mount exhibitions.

Tohoku Electric asked for the work to be temporarily removed on grounds that people looking in from the street might regard it as suspicious.

The dirt is from Fukushima Prefecture, site of the 2011 nuclear disaster. It has already been decontaminated of radiation. The installation was created by Takashi Murakami, who is also an associate professor of art education at Miyagi University of Education.

He should not be confused with the pop artist of the same name, who is internationally famous and has also been involved in charity efforts to assist victims of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

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(Hideaki Ishibashi)

Additional decontamination in Kawauchi

October 17, 2014

Additional cleanup starts in a Fukushima village

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20141017_29.html

Oct. 17, 2014 - Updated 11:08 UTC+2

The government has begun additional decontamination work in a village in Fukushima Prefecture **where an evacuation order linked to the nuclear accident was lifted this month.**

The work is intended to have former residents feel it's safe to return to the district in Kawauchi Village near the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

Some residents are hesitant about returning due to radiation worries, even after the government said the area has been cleaned up and lifted its order on October 1st.

Government contractors began the additional decontamination work this week. On Friday, they removed soil at 2 still-vacant houses.

Workers reported that radiation readings dropped by more than 90 percent from 2.89 micro-sieverts per

hour near the ground just outside a barn at one of the houses.

Contractors are due to decontaminate 23 locations by the end of October. Government officials say not all houses will be subject to the additional work, and that the cleanup will be conducted as needed.

An additional round of decontamination was earlier launched in part of the Miyakoji district in Tamura City in the same prefecture, but not on as large a scale as in Kawauchi Village.

The evacuation order for Miyakoji was lifted in April. The order remains in place for 9 other communities in Fukushima Prefecture.

Stop nukes immediately : 27% of Fukushima voters

October 20, 2014

ASAHI POLL: 27% of Fukushima voters want immediate end to nuclear power

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201410200030

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Twenty-seven percent of voters in Fukushima Prefecture, home to the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, want Japan to immediately abolish nuclear energy, around double the national average, an Asahi Shimbun survey found.

About 55 percent of voters in the prefecture support a break away from nuclear power in the near future, according to the telephone survey conducted on Oct. 18-19.

The survey results showed anti-nuclear sentiment is higher in Fukushima Prefecture than in the rest of the country.

Thirteen percent of voters in Tokyo supported the immediate abolition of nuclear energy in a survey in February, while 15 percent expressed the same opinion in a nationwide survey in January.

In those earlier surveys, 61 percent of Tokyoites and 62 percent of respondents nationwide said Japan should break away from nuclear power in the near future.

The latest survey covered 1,701 voters in Fukushima Prefecture and received 1,091 valid responses.

Only 15 percent of Fukushima voters said Japan should continue relying on nuclear energy, compared with 22 percent in the survey in Tokyo and 19 percent nationwide.

The survey also revealed that 66 percent of Fukushima voters accept Governor Yuhei Sato's decision to allow the construction of an interim facility to store radioactive waste from cleanup work in the prefecture.

Eighteen percent said they disagree with Sato's decision.

In addition, 53 percent said they support the central government's decision to end its policy of helping all evacuees from the nuclear disaster return to their homes and instead assist them in resettling elsewhere. Twenty-eight percent were against the decision.

Up to 56 percent of respondents said they highly evaluate the governor's efforts to rebuild the prefecture from the damage caused by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster, compared with 25 percent who said otherwise.

Forty percent of Fukushima voters said they support Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet, matching the 40 percent who did not support the Cabinet.

Opponents to restart protest

October 20, 2014

Opponents scuffle with officials

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Oct. 20, 2014 - Updated 13:11 UTC+2

People opposed to the restart of the Sendai nuclear power plant in southern Japan scuffled with city officials when they tried to enter a room where the city assembly's special panel was meeting.

After the panel adopted a petition calling for the restart of the plant, people gathered in front of the Satsumasendai city hall to protest the decision.

Residents are divided over whether the Sendai nuclear plant should resume operations.

A hotel worker says she wants the plant to return online soon because it is the pillar of the local economy.

A man says nuclear plants need to be restarted to ensure a steady energy supply. He says he recently visited the plant and was impressed by the safety measures that have been implemented.

An 82-year-old woman says the assembly seems intent on restarting the plant soon. She says officials should take more time to ensure that future generations are able to live without worries.

Another woman says the officials are acting too hastily in making their decision before the prefecture concludes its public briefings.

She says more discussions are needed, but that she is worried because officials seem to be rushing to restart the plant.

Koizumi criticizes Abe's nuclear revival policy

October 23, 2014

Ex-PM Koizumi raps Abe's aim to revive nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141023p2g00m0dm040000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, known as a firm opponent to nuclear power following the 2011 Fukushima meltdowns, on Wednesday criticized current Japanese leader Shinzo Abe's policy to revive the country's nuclear power generation.

"The government says Japan has the world's toughest safety standards for nuclear plants, but are they really tough compared with (regulations in) the United States, France or Finland? Not at all," Koizumi told a symposium in Tokyo.

All 48 commercial reactors in Japan are currently offline, but Abe is pushing for the restart of reactors that have cleared the post-Fukushima regulations. A two-reactor plant operated by Kyushu Electric Power Co. may go back online as early as the beginning of the next year.

Koizumi urged Abe to break away from nuclear power, saying, "People would not cooperate" over the matter of finding a final disposal site for high-level radioactive waste unless the government vows "not to increase nuclear waste anymore."

In May, Koizumi established a body to promote renewable energy together with another former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, who unsuccessfully ran in the Tokyo gubernatorial election in February on an antinuclear platform.

October 23, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Local opposition causes delay

October 24, 2014

Residents delay search for radioactive waste site

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20141024_27.html

Oct. 24, 2014 - Updated 11:02 UTC+2

Japan's Environment Ministry has suspended inspections of 3 sites under consideration for a radioactive waste disposal facility due to local opposition at 1 of the locations.

The ministry planned to start field surveys on Friday at 3 state-owned sites in Miyagi Prefecture to find a place for a permanent storage facility for contaminated waste stemming from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident.

But about 40 opponents of the survey in the town of Kami, including Mayor Hirobumi Inomata, were waiting for ministry officials at the site.

Inomata asked them to stop the survey, saying that State Minister Yasuhiro Ozato had earlier said he took the request seriously.

The officials called off the survey for the day.

Officials at the 2 other sites under consideration also called off planned surveys Friday morning. Those other sites are in the city of Kurihara and town of Taiwa.

A senior official at the ministry's Tohoku regional office said current circumstances make it difficult to go ahead with the surveys. He added he will consult with the ministry about what to do.

Protests continue in Miyagi

October 25, 2014

Miyagi town protesters block gov't survey of proposed radioactively contaminated waste site

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141025p2a00m0na014000c.html>

KAMI, Miyagi -- Protesters here have continued to block an Environment Ministry team from conducting tests at a proposed final site in the town for disposing of waste contaminated with radioactive substances from the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Local protesters blocked the road into the proposed site on Oct. 24, thereby preventing the government team from conducting a drilling survey that was scheduled to begin at the site that day. The protesters also submitted a formal letter of protest to the ministry against the proposed site.

Local residents began assembling at the roadblock on the following morning of Oct. 25 at about 6 a.m., holding banners emblazoned with slogans against the disposal site. The Environment Ministry survey team of around 15 people arrived at about 8:40 a.m. with weed cutters and other equipment, intent on making it to the site. However, they were met with chants of "Go home!" and "We'll never allow the disposal facility!" and were unable to get by the protesters.

Kami residents have insisted that the site in their town -- one of three in the prefecture proposed by the government -- does not meet the requirements for a disposal facility, citing fragile rock formations and the serious danger of contaminating local ground water, among other points. They included these objections in the letter of protest presented to an official from the Environment Ministry's Tohoku office.

"There's no guaranteeing our safety if a final disposal site is built here. We will continue our protest," said a 56-year-old resident, who also read the letter out to those at the roadblock. Meanwhile, the 72-year-old head of the local anti-disposal site organization stated, "The Environment Ministry has no idea how much we're worried about economic damage rumors about this place will cause. I will not let them (the survey team) pass, even at the cost of my life."

The ministry official who accepted the letter of protest told reporters, "It will be very hard for us to clear away the residents and enter the site under these conditions, so we will consider whether to forcibly remove the protesters."

The Environment Ministry had planned to start drilling surveys at two other proposed sites in Kurihara and Taiwa, Miyagi Prefecture, but postponed the operations as the municipalities have insisted that all three scheduled surveys be conducted simultaneously.

October 25, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Permanent waste storage: Not in Shioya, please!

October 27, 2014

Town submits petition opposing waste facility

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20141029_33.html

Oct. 29, 2014 - Updated 10:17 UTC+1

Residents of Shioya Town, Tochigi Prefecture, have petitioned the Environment Ministry to drop a site in their town from consideration to host a facility for storing radioactive waste.

The site in Shioya, north of Tokyo, is one of five the government wants to build permanent storage facilities on for designated waste. The waste is material from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident that has radiation levels exceeding 8,000 becquerels per kilogram.

The mayor of Shioya and the leader of a group of residents handed their petition to State Minister of the Environment Yasuhiro Ozato at the ministry in Tokyo on Wednesday.

Shioya has a population of about 12,000. But the petition was signed by about 173,000 people from across Japan.

Residents and their supporters claim a permanent storage facility would threaten the town's water supply and accelerate population decline.

State Minister Ozato said he takes the residents' and signatories' concerns seriously. He stressed the importance of smooth communication and exchange of views over those concerns.

The representative of the residents' group said that he expects the State Minister to understand that the signatures show how strongly people feel about the government's plan.

The Environment Ministry plans to hold a meeting of the prefecture's mayors on November 9th to win support for the permanent storage facility.

Shioya is expected to reiterate their opposition to the plan.

Antinuke protest in Tokyo

October 30, 2014

Anti-nuclear protesters try to fire up corporate workers in Tokyo

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201410300075>

By WATARU SEKITA/ Staff Writer

Men and women in business attire thronged the Shinbashi district of Tokyo on Oct. 29 to encourage fellow office workers to protest against moves to restart the Sendai nuclear power plant in southern Japan. The municipal assembly and the mayor of Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, gave the green light a day earlier to restarting the two-reactor Sendai facility operated by Kyushu Electric Power Co. It is the first plant to win such approval under new safety requirements since the nuclear disaster in Fukushima Prefecture in 2011.

Michihiko Senda, a 48-year-old company worker in Tokyo who helped organize the rally, said it was aimed at garnering like-minded white-collar workers who he believes should be thinking about the issue. A woman aged 46 who took part said: "I have a 5-year-old child and have been worried (about nuclear plants being reactivated) since the disaster. I can't change the situation, but I wanted to at least express my feelings."

40 NGOs demand revision of latest UNSCEAR report

October 29, 2014

<http://hrn.or.jp/eng/news/2014/10/29/japanese-civil-society-and-that-from-7-other-countries-request-the-reports-of-the-united-nations-scientific-committee-on-fukushima-to-be-revised/>

Japanese civil society and that from 7 other countries request the reports of the United Nations Scientific Committee on Fukushima to be revised

Joint Statement

Civil Society groups request revision of the recent United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) Report: "Levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 Great East-Japan Earthquake and tsunami."

Human Rights Now, along with 40 civil society organizations from Japan, USA, Tunisia, Azerbaijan, Netherlands, Germany, France, and Ireland has issued a statement requesting UNSCEAR, and the General Assembly Fourth Committee to revise the report and its finding from a human rights perspective. Please find the actual statement from below.

PDF version is available here: Letter to UNSCEAR2014

Date: 24 October 2014

**To: Members of the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly 69th Session,
Members of UNSCEAR, and**

Members of the UN General Assembly:

Re: Civil Society groups request revision of the recent United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) Report: "Levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident after the 2011 Great East-Japan Earthquake and tsunami."

The 2011 Fukushima disaster made UN oversight of the adverse effects of ionizing radiation an issue of utmost global importance. The goals and criteria of oversight should be the protection and promotion of the human right to health and well-being, which encompasses an environment as free from exposure to man-made ionizing radiation as possible. We, the undersigned, urge the 4th Committee to examine critically both the scientific conclusions in the UNSCEAR report and the scientific evidence omitted from the report.

Physicians from 19 national affiliates of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), including Physicians for Social Responsibility (USA) and IPPNW Germany, have authored/issued/published a Critique of the UNSCEAR report which calls into question the presumptions and data used by UNSCEAR, and the consequent interpretations and conclusions. This Critique demonstrates how UNSCEAR systematically underestimates and downplays the health effects of the Fukushima disaster.

We appreciate the significant efforts made by UNSCEAR committee members to evaluate the extensive and complex data concerning the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe. However, their conclusion that there is "no discernable effect", now or in the future, defies common sense and undermines the credibility of UNSCEAR. The Critique notes that based on the UNSCEAR report itself, it can be expected that about 1,000 excess cases of thyroid cancer and between 4,300 and 16,800 other excess cancer cases would occur in Japan due to Fukushima radioactive fallout. We believe that these are very discernable effects for the individuals, families and communities experiencing these cancers, as well as those individuals who will experience other form(s) of radiation induced illness.

Furthermore, the conclusion by UNSCEAR of 'no discernible health effect' is misleading the Japanese government to not implement countermeasures for individuals to avoid additional exposure and to have thorough monitoring of health effects, thereby causing serious human rights violations.

This catastrophe was not a singular event that has come to an end, but rather it is an unfolding event with an unknown endpoint. Radioactive elements continue to leak into the biosphere and individuals continue to be exposed to ionizing radiation because they live in contaminated areas, consume contaminated food and water and inhale contaminated air. Additionally, most of the health effects from Fukushima will take decades or generations to be expressed. Thus the UNSCEAR report at hand should be considered a preliminary or initial assessment of the health effects of Fukushima. Ongoing and improved monitoring and updating of the assessment is required for a long time to come. The 2014 UNSCEAR report is a beginning, not an end.

We ask that the Fourth Committee take two actions regarding the UNSCEAR report:

1) Return the report to UNSCEAR for revision based on the Critique, taking into consideration the points of concern raised in the Critique, and that UNSCEAR broaden the composition of the committee to include as full-fledged members scientists who are critical of nuclear activities.

2) We also ask that the Fourth Committee urge the General Assembly to pass a new resolution reframing the 1955 UNSCEAR founding mandate to ensure that the UNSCEAR's primary scientific mission is to promote and protect public health and the right to health of the most vulnerable individuals. The Precautionary Principle should be employed to address the short-term and long-term effects of ionizing radiation upon present and future generations as well as the environment. Likewise, the Precautionary Principle should be employed when determining exposure, cleanup and decontamination regulations and activities after a nuclear disaster, educational measures to minimize and mitigate the risk of individual exposure, and the long-term monitoring of contaminated sites. A new UN mandate is critical for UNSCEAR Committee members to be able to fully utilize their expertise for the purpose of protecting the lives and health of the global community.

This request is supported by the following organizations:

Physicians for Social Responsibility, USA

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War – Germany, Germany

Human Rights Now, Tokyo, Japan

Peace Boat – US, USA

Niji to midori no kai, Japan

Greens Fukushima, Japan

Workers' Executive Committee For Anti-nuclear Power Movements, Japan

Kai Fukushima Downwind, Japan

The Nature Conservation of Fukushima, Japan

Friends of the Earth Japan, Japan

Showa Shell Labour Union, Japan

Chernobyl Health Survey and Health-care Support for the Victims – Japan Women's Network, Japan

Nuclear Disaster Information Center, Japan

Japan International Volunteer Center, Japan

Campaign for Nuclear-free Japan, Japan

Fukushima Network for Denuclearization, Japan

Hairo Action Fukushima, Japan

Fukushima Women Against Nukes, Japan

People in Fukushima-NPP 30km area, Japan

Refugee Living with Fukushima in Niigata Prefecture, Japan
Shinshu 3.11 Network, Japan
National Network of Parents to Protect Children from Radiation, Japan
The Civil Forum on Nuclear Radiation Damages (CFNRD), Japan
Takagi School, Japan
AEEFG – Association de l'Education Environnementale pour les Futures Generations, Tunisia
NGO of "Ecolife", Azerbaijan
Women in Europe for a Common Future International, Netherlands
Women in Europe for a Common Future, Germany
Women in Europe for a Common Future, France
Irish Doctors' Environmental Association (IDEA), Ireland
Nuclear Information and Resource Service, USA
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, USA
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, New York, USA
Nukewatch/The Progressive Foundation, USA
Nuclear Watch New Mexico, USA
Georgia WAND – Women's Actions for New Directions, USA
Physicians for Social Responsibility – Kansas City, USA
Gray Panthers, USA
Center for Safe Energy, USA
Nuclear Energy Information Service, USA
[Responses to this request may be directed to:
Physicians for Social Responsibility USA
Alfred Meyer, Board Member
alfred.c.meyer@gmail.com
+1-202-215-8208]

Antinuke protesters against "hasty" decision

November 7, 2014

Anti-nuclear rally against plant restart

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20141107_37.html

Nov. 7, 2014 - Updated 10:54 UTC+1

Anti-nuclear protesters on Friday held a rally in front of the Kagoshima prefectural office. They are opposing the restart of the Sendai nuclear power plant.

The protesters criticized the prefectural assembly members for approving the restart of the plant. They said they regret the assembly made the hasty decision in an extraordinary session, ignoring the views of the people in the prefecture and elsewhere in Japan. They added they will continue to fight against the restart.

A local woman said she can't understand why the assembly members want to resume the plant operation so prematurely.

A man from neighboring Kumamoto Prefecture said radioactive substances could spread to areas beyond Kagoshima and contaminate them. He added he doubts the effectiveness of the Kagoshima Prefecture's evacuation program.

Forget protests

November 7, 2014

Kagoshima governor approves restart of Sendai Nuclear Power Plant despite protests

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141107p2a00m0na021000c.html>

KAGOSHIMA -- Kagoshima Gov. Yuichiro Ito gave his consent on Nov. 7 to restarting the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in the Kagoshima Prefecture city of Satsumasendai despite strong protests from locals and other demonstrators who arrived from areas as far away as Fukushima Prefecture.

Gov. Ito's move came after the Kagoshima Prefectural Assembly adopted a petition calling for reactivation of the plant. Some 400 people had gathered both inside and outside the prefectural assembly chamber, trying to prevent Kagoshima from becoming the first prefecture housing a nuclear plant to approve reactivation under new safety guidelines for nuclear power, but they failed to sway officials.

Police and workers from the prefectural government headquarters closely guarded the assembly building on Nov. 7. At about 9 a.m., a group opposed to restarting the plant's reactors gathered in front of the prefectural government building, protesting that officials were ignoring public opinion.

Among the demonstrators were 12 people from Fukushima Prefecture, which hosts the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, the scene of the nation's worst-ever nuclear disaster.

"The disaster taught us that there's no such thing as a safe nuclear power plant, and that humans and nuclear power can't coexist," said 58-year-old Yoshiharu Saito, an executive from an organization in the city of Fukushima. "I came here to Kagoshima to convey the feelings of Fukushima Prefecture residents who went through the disaster."

Eiji Yanase, a 60-year-old member of an organization in Saga Prefecture, which is home to the Genkai Nuclear Power Plant, also took part in the protest.

"We are seeing one fait accompli after another. I don't want the children and grandchildren of the future to have to pay the price," he said.

Also protesting was 61-year-old Shigenobu Kawahara, from Isahaya, Nagasaki Prefecture. "To stop moves toward restarting the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant will lead to halting the reactivation of other nuclear power plants," he said.

A plenary session of the Kagoshima Prefectural Assembly commenced at 10 a.m. and the 150 public gallery seats were almost fully occupied. Outside, some reactivation opponents who were unable to enter the prefectural government building shouted that they be let in, resulting in a tussle with prefectural government workers.

Anger against the move to restart the reactors resounded within the chamber, when Makoto Nakamura, chairman of the prefectural assembly's special committee on nuclear power safety measures, reported on the committee's screening results from the previous day. When Nakamura used such expressions as "the world's safest standards," jeers erupted from the public gallery, with one protester yelling out, "Are you still saying things like that?"

November 07, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Minamata group says safety takes back seat again

November 9, 2014

Minamata disease group opposes restart of Sendai nuclear plant

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201411090008>

By YASUSHI SAITO/ Staff Writer

MINAMATA, Kumamoto Prefecture--Minamata disease victims and supporters have joined the protest against the restart of nuclear reactors in Kumamoto Prefecture, saying **safety again is taking a back seat in the drive for economic growth.**

"If they miss the danger of nuclear plants because of economic priorities, they have not learned the lessons from Minamata disease," said Koichiro Matsunaga, who heads the group "Stop restarting nuclear plants Minamata."

Formed in September by eight members, including three Minamata disease patients, the group plans to collaborate with local organizations to oppose the resumption of operations at the Sendai nuclear power plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture.

Kagoshima Governor Yuichiro Ito on Nov. 7 approved the plant's restart, the first such green light under stricter safety standards that were established following the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011.

The city of Minamata is about 40 kilometers from the plant at the shortest distance.

Minamata disease, a sometimes fatal neurological disorder that causes numbness and vision problems, was officially recognized as a health hazard 58 years ago. Caused by consumption of marine products contaminated by mercury discharged into the sea by a chemical factory, **the disease remains a negative symbol of Japan's period of high economic growth.**

Matsunaga said he sees similarities between the Sendai plant's restart and Minamata disease.

"While human lives should take priority, the priority has been placed on corporate profits," Matsunaga said. "(The government) has not learned lessons from Minamata and Fukushima.

Matsunaga, 51, visited Iitate in Fukushima Prefecture in February 2013. Many residents of the mountain village, whose center is about 40 km from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, remain in evacuation because of the high levels of radiation around their homes.

Matsunaga said that when he saw the Iitate village office, the vacant houses in the central area and temporary housing, he thought: "Residents cannot return home even if they wanted to.

"The Fukushima nuclear power plant has been tormenting people who were born and brought up in this village. There is no guarantee that Minamata can avoid the same fate."

He cited two problems with restarting the reactors at the Sendai plant: inadequate evacuation plans in the event of a disaster and a lack of trust in the government.

Matsunaga noted that the central government said it would take responsibility for the resumption of operations at the nuclear plant.

"But it did not take responsibility for Minamata disease, either," Matsunaga said.

The mayor of Satsuma-Sendai and the city assembly approved the reactor restarts earlier, on Oct. 28.

Matsunaga's group urged the Minamata assembly to adopt a written statement opposing the reactor restarts, but the assembly rejected it.

"Despite Minamata disease, a public hazard, economic priorities always come first," said Kenji Nagamoto, a 55-year-old Minamata disease patient. "I am disappointed we were not understood."

Minamata city plans to accept 6,645 evacuees from Izumi, Kagoshima Prefecture, if a serious accident occurs at the Sendai nuclear plant.

“With evacuation plans insufficient, to what extent can the central government assure the people’s security?” Matsunaga asked.

Minamata Mayor Hiroshi Nishida on Nov. 8 also expressed concerns about the aftermath of a potential nuclear accident.

“We hope the central government will give a sufficient explanation to eliminate the anxieties of Minamata citizens who will accept evacuees, as well as resolve the problem responsibly and with sincerity,” Nishida said in a statement.

Another Minamata-based group involved in possible evacuation procedures asked the Kagoshima governor in May to oppose the resumption of the plant. The group’s view was not reflected in his decision.

“If a serious accident occurs, Minamata will also be subjected to evacuation,” said Takafumi Nagano, head of the group. “I feel angry that Kagoshima Prefecture made the judgment (to resume operations) alone.”

Nagano also said the central government’s assurances cannot be trusted.

“Industry minister Yoichi Miyazawa said he will stand at the forefront to assume responsibility. But I cannot believe what he said when containment of the Fukushima plant accident is still not evident,” Nagano said. **“They only seem to be rushing to restart** operations of the (Sendai) plant.”

NRA will study objection

November 12, 2014

Residents object to NRA go-ahead for Sendai plant

Nov. 12, 2014 - Updated 09:36 UTC+1

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority has accepted a formal objection by some 1,400 people across the country against its permission to put the Sendai nuclear plant back online.

The NRA gave the go-ahead in September for the plant in Kagoshima Prefecture, southwestern Japan. Its safety measures were judged to comply with the authority's requirements.

The agency said on Wednesday that the objectors include residents near the plant and that they demanded that it withdraw the permission.

They say the approval was made despite safety problems such as insufficient preparedness for earthquakes of maximum possible scale.

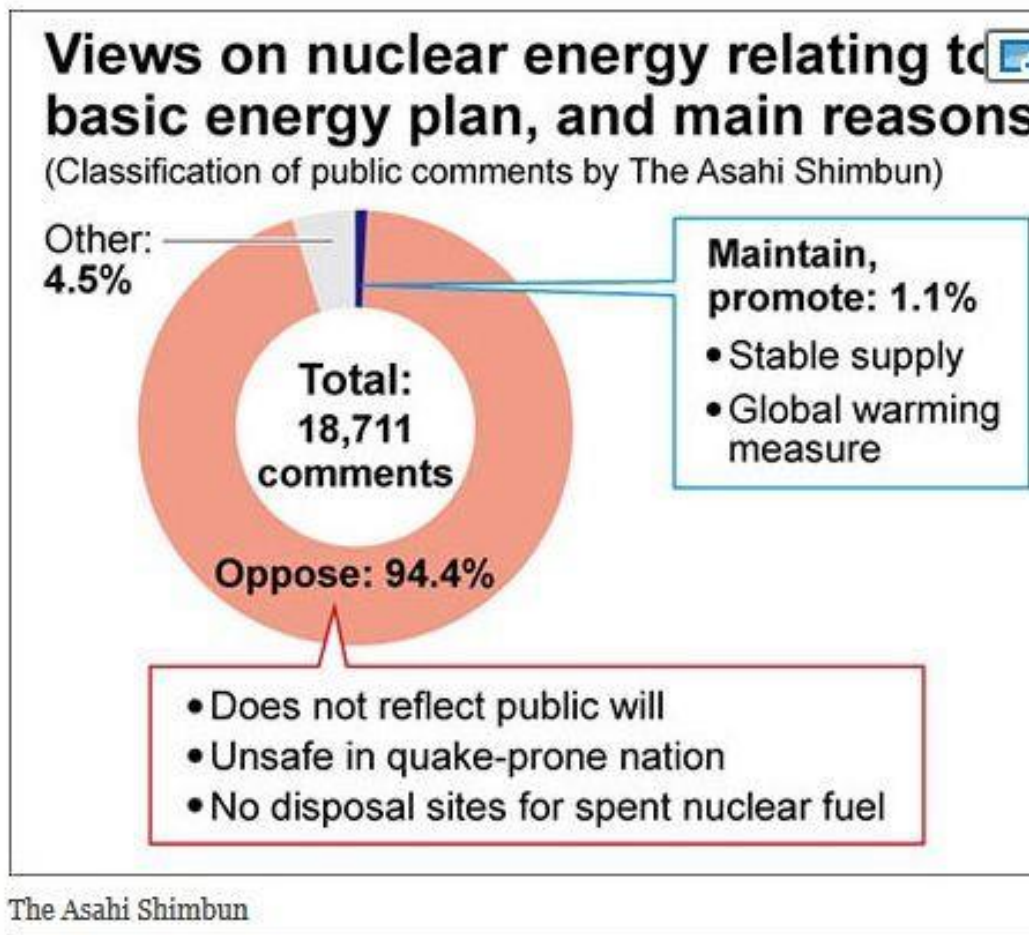
They also say the authority's failure to confirm whether evacuation plans would work in case of a nuclear accident runs counter to its aim of protecting people and the environment.

The authority says it will give the residents a chance to voice their views, and study details of their

objection.

Restarting the plant's reactors will likely take place next year, as the NRA must assess documents submitted by Kyushu Electric Power Company and check new equipment.

Listening to the public?



November 12, 2014

Energy plan overlooked flat-out opposition to nuclear power, analysis shows

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201411120044>

By ATSUSHI KOMORI/ Senior Staff Writer

The government's compilation of its basic energy plan ignored an overwhelming call from the public to move away from nuclear energy, according to an analysis by The Asahi Shimbun.

More than 90 percent of the comments submitted to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry in response to the government's proposed plan were against nuclear power, the analysis showed.

Yet nuclear energy was described as an "important base-load electricity source" in the plan approved by the Abe Cabinet in April.

The Asahi received a total of 18,711 comments from the ministry after submitting an information disclosure request.

Among them, 17,665, or 94.4 percent of the total, expressed opposition to restarting operations at nuclear power plants or called for decommissioning them.

Only 213 comments, or 1.1 percent, were in favor of maintaining or further promoting nuclear energy.

In about 833 cases, or 4.5 percent, it was difficult to judge what position was being taken. These comments were classified as “other.”

Among the comments calling for a move away from nuclear power generation, the major reasons were “the draft (of the plan) does not reflect the public will,” and “there are no disposal sites for spent nuclear fuel.”

Among the comments in favor of nuclear energy, the main reasons given were the need for a stable electricity supply and the need for nuclear energy to deal with global warming.

The ministry disclosed 2,109 of the comments in May, with the remainder made available to the Asahi.

The industry ministry presented its draft of the energy plan on Dec. 6, 2013. Over the next month, it received public comments through fax or e-mail.

In February 2014, the ministry disclosed the main opinions it collected but did not classify them according to whether they were in favor of or opposed to nuclear energy.

Explaining why such a classification was not made, one ministry official said: “The opinion of an organization and that of an individual count as one comment. So we organized (the comments) not based on numbers but rather on their content.”

Understandably, it may be difficult to compile an accurate count of the opinions because the names attached to the comments were deleted for privacy reasons. Some individuals apparently sent in the same comment more than once. Several dozen faxes had similar wording in an opinion calling for a move away from nuclear power generation.

In 2012, when the Democratic Party of Japan held the reins of government, it called for a national debate on what rate of power generation nuclear energy should account for in 2030.

About 89,000 public comments were received, with about 90 percent of them in favor of a move away from nuclear energy.

Opposition of residents delays storage surveys

November 14, 2014

Radioactive waste site surveys to go beyond Nov.

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20141114_42.html

Nov. 14, 2014 - Updated 12:39 UTC+1

Japan's Environment Ministry said on Friday that it won't be able to complete its inspections of 3 candidate sites for a radioactive waste disposal facility in November **due to the opposition of local residents.**

The ministry plans to conduct field surveys at the 3 state-owned sites in Miyagi Prefecture, northeastern Japan, to find a place for a permanent storage facility for contaminated waste stemming from the

Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Ministry officials wanted to complete the surveys by the end of November before snow piles up on the ground. But they could not start the inspections due to opposition of local residents. Snow has also started to fall in the prefecture.

The officials now hope the surveys taking about one month will end in May or later after snow melts.

The officials said they are sorry for the delay. But they added they will explain the surveys in detail to gain local understanding.

Meanwhile in Fukushima



Meanwhile in Fukushima

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/soundproof/meanwhile-in-fukushima/5839298>

- Listen now
- Download audio

Sunday 16 November 2014 8:05PM

Image: (Seb Jarnot) [Link to larger image.](#)

Almost 4 years after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant disaster in Japan, a sound project sends a signal to the people of Fukushima - that we are still listening.

Meanwhile in Fukushima is a collaborative audio arts project led by French artist, Dominique Balaÿ, who felt he couldn't remain passive as the disaster unfolded. Balaÿ flew to Japan and spent a month in Tokyo

and Fukushima, collected more than 30 hours of field recordings and interviews, and created an online library of 'open sounds'. He invited sound artists all over the world to work with those recordings to create, compose and connect.

Since 2011, more than 50 artists have participated in the the project, which has featured in 20+ countries.

And for all the soundies out there who would like to get involved -

Meanwhile in Fukushima is still taking contributions.

Dominique Balaÿ, born in 1968, works and lives in the South of France. He's the founder and artistic director of WebSYNradio.

Meanwhile in Fukushima playlist

Tomoko Momiyama,

I Saw Time, under a Cherry Tree Carl Stone,

Threnody, for the victims of Fukushima Bérangère Maximin & Colin Johnco,

Le fléau Roxanne Turcotte,

Zone d'exclusion Cristian Vogel, Candle song

What's happening to the debate on nukes?

December 7, 2014 Debating nuclear energy

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2014/12/03/editorials/debating-nuclear-energy/#.VH8aJcl5Cos>

Nuclear energy remains a divisive issue more than three years after the March 2011 triple meltdowns at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration has reversed its predecessor's policy of seeking a phaseout of nuclear power and is pushing to restart nuclear reactors that have been idled in the wake of the 2011 disaster, even as media surveys show a majority of the public remains opposed to reactivating the plants.

The Dec. 14 Lower House election provides voters with a chance to have their say in the nation's energy policy, which not only affects their everyday lives but will have broad long-term social and economic repercussions. The candidates and their parties in the race are urged to clarify their positions and voters should not hesitate to make their voices heard.

The administration's energy policy sounds self-contradictory. Abe pledges to reduce the nation's energy dependency on nuclear power "as much as possible" — without setting specific targets or a timetable — through energy-saving efforts and introduction of renewable energy. But his government's basic energy plan adopted in April — the first since the Fukushima disaster — calls nuclear power an "important baseload source" of the nation's electricity supply. The prime minister is also leading efforts to promote the sale of Japan's nuclear power technology overseas.

While the same plan calls for maximum efforts in the three years from 2013 to increase Japan's supply of renewable energy, the administration has begun reviewing the feed-in tariff system — introduced in 2012 to promote renewable energy — after power companies stopped buying solar power under the system on the grounds that increased purchase of such energy could disrupt the stability of the power supply. At the same time it is pursuing the liberalization of a power industry long dominated by regional monopolies, the administration is reportedly weighing measures to help the utilities maintain their nuclear power plants

after they're exposed to greater price competition through the deregulation. Which direction the administration is headed in its policy on nuclear energy remains unclear.

Today, all of the nation's 48 nuclear power reactors remain offline. Power companies have applied for the Nuclear Regulation Authority's screening of their plans to restart 20 of them — under the safety standards updated in the wake of the 2011 disaster — and Kyushu Electric Power Co. has cleared the NRA screening and obtained local governments' nod to restart the Nos. 1 and 2 reactors at its Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture.

The Liberal Democratic Party, which promised in the 2012 election to “seek to establish a socio-economic structure that does not need to rely on nuclear power,” says this time that it will push for reactivating plants that have been approved by the NRA under what Abe once touted as the world's most stringent safety regulations.

The power firms seek to restart the idled reactors as they face the heavy cost of imported fuel to increase output at thermal power plants to compensate for the shutdown of nuclear power plants. Restarting a single nuclear reactor will save them an estimated ¥10 billion to ¥15 billion a month in fuel expenses. Abe has argued that the nation is losing trillions of yen each year because of the added fuel imports, whose cost has also been exacerbated by the yen's fall against the dollar. The business sector also decries the higher cost of electricity and calls for the restart of nuclear reactors.

The process is being pushed forward while more than 120,000 people in Fukushima remain displaced from their homes due to radiation fallout from the 2011 meltdowns at the No. 1 plant and as Tepco continues to struggle in its bid to clean up the mess. The blind faith in the safety of nuclear power has been shattered by the Fukushima disaster, and the much-touted cost advantage of nuclear energy over other sources appear to be in doubt.

The administration has not provided convincing answers to various key questions posed over nuclear power, including the doubts over its policy of seeking a nuclear fuel cycle or the pending issue of permanent disposal of highly radioactive nuclear waste. The opinions expressed in media polls show that a large part of the public is still not convinced of the safety of nuclear energy.

When the DPJ-led government decided in 2012 to seek phasing out nuclear power in Japan by the 2030s, it took the unusual step of sounding out popular opinion on the issue through surveys and public gatherings. After taking power from the DPJ two years ago, **the Abe administration reverted to the old ways of discussing nuclear energy issues in a closed circuit of interested groups and reversed the nuclear phaseout policy** without setting a clear direction on what role nuclear power should play in the nation's long-term energy plan.

Japan's energy policy also shapes its actions on climate change, because the energy sector accounts for a major portion of the nation's emissions of global warming gases such as carbon dioxide. The government came under international criticism last year when it replaced its plan for cuts to emissions by 2020, because its new “tentative” plan represented a net increase in emissions from the Kyoto Protocol base year of 1990. Officials said the plan was the best they could offer while the future of idled nuclear power plants remains uncertain.

Japan's carbon emissions have in fact increased as the nation relied more on thermal power output after the Fukushima meltdowns. But the uncertainty over nuclear power, which does not emit carbon dioxide in power generation, should not be used as an excuse for inaction on efforts to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. Nor should Japan's climate policy rely on nuclear energy, since it would be unrealistic to expect a return to the condition before 2011, when nuclear energy accounted for 30 percent of the nation's electricity supply. **Lawmakers and parties need to lay out energy plans that include measures to reduce emissions.**

Show us a road map!

December 12, 2014

Nuclear plant protesters call on opposition parties to show road map

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20141212p2a00m0na007000c.html>

Antinuclear plant protesters meeting every Friday in front of the prime minister's official residence recently spoke with the Mainichi, with one of them calling on opposition parties to show a road map to a nuclear power-free future.

On the night of Dec. 5, protesters breathed on their hands to keep them warm as they shouted slogans like, "We oppose reactivation of the Sendai Nuclear Plant!" and "Don't retract the goal of no nuclear power plants!"

A 70-year-old security guard passing by the protests who said he is a Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) supporter commented, "Even if they call for getting rid of nuclear plants, the opposition parties haven't shown an alternative, have they?"

Both of the national elections since the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster have been landslide victories for the LDP. In the 2012 House of Representatives election, in which the LDP retook control of the administration, the LDP ran on a platform that included creating an economy and society that would not need to be dependent on nuclear power. In this election, however, that language is not in the LDP's party platform, and it is leaning heavily toward nuclear plant reactivation.

Meanwhile, a September poll by the Mainichi showed nearly 60 percent of the public continues to be opposed to restarting the country's nuclear plants.

A 65-year-old head director of a nursery school walking by the protests said, "I want to stop the out-of-control LDP, and I want the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) to handle itself well."

Still, when the now-opposition DPJ was in power in June 2012, it decided to reactivate the Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture. Afterward, in response to public opinion against nuclear power, the DPJ made a goal of having no active nuclear power plants by the 2030s, but it put off making a Cabinet decision on the matter.

"They have the support of power company unions, so I wonder if they are really antinuclear power," said a 72-year-old man participating in the protest.

A 68-year-old man playing an instrument at the demonstration said, "I don't know who to cast my vote for." The Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party are running on platforms of instantly taking a no-nuclear plants approach, but the man said, "Even if no plants are restarted, I wish the opposition parties would show a concrete road map for how to dispose of the nuclear waste that already exists."

Misao Redwolf, part of an organization running the protests, which have continued for two years and nine months, said the demonstrations were at their height around the time of the decision to restart the Oi Nuclear Power Plant.

"To put it bluntly, people are less on their toes than back then. But the fact that the protests are still continuing shows that they are stable. I think that what is most important is making our thoughts visible," Redwolf said.

A 64-year-old man who participates in the protests around once a month said, "I'll go to the polls. Even if my vote makes no difference, it's a chance to express myself. If we stop going to the polls, democracy itself will crumble."

Near the end of the protest, a 49-year-old woman said, "Today I stopped by the protest for the first time, on my way home from work. I was thinking about whether it's OK for us to keep having nuclear power." She added, "Today I again thought about how I alone cannot change anything, but I lent my voice to the protest anyway. I feel the same about the election. Even if it's just one vote, if I don't vote nothing will change."

December 12, 2014(Mainichi Japan)

Fukui and nuclear power

December 12, 2014

In Fukui, economy, reactors inseparable in election debate

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/12/12/national/politics-diplomacy/in-fukui-economy-reactors-inseparable-in-election-debate/#.VIsgk3tpQW4>

by Eric Johnston

Staff Writer

For most of Japan, especially its major cities, the issues of how effective Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his ruling coalition's economic policies have been and whether to restart the nation's idled nuclear reactors are generally treated by politicians and the media as separate debates.

In **Fukui, home to 13 of Japan's 48 operational reactors**, the largest concentration in the nation, the two issues are intimately connected in a prefecture that is one of the most conservative in the country, and one where Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party dominates.

Under a redistricting change, this election marks the first time that the prefecture will have only two single-seat districts, down from three. Six candidates are running for a seat in the two districts.

But two local media polls put the LDP incumbents well ahead of challengers from the Democratic Party of Japan, Ishin no To (Japan Innovation Party) and the Japanese Communist Party.

The Fukui Shimbun and the Nikkan Kenmin Fukui Shimbun predict strong victories for the LDP's Tomomi Inada, 55, and Tsuyoshi Takagi, 58. A poll by the latter in early December showed 65.3 percent of respondents felt the overall economy was the most important campaign issue. Social welfare was the most important issue for 31.7 percent of the pollees. Twenty-four percent said nuclear power was most important and 20.2 percent said it was local economic revitalization.

Ultra-right LDP policy chief Inada, a close confidante of Abe, is seeking to keep her seat in the first district, which includes the city of Fukui. In the second district, where Fukui's 13 commercial nuclear reactors and the Monju experimental fast-breeder reactor are located, Takagi is seeking re-election.

Taku Yamamoto, who represented the old Fukui No. 2 district, is standing as an LDP proportional representative candidate. He is the husband of another close, far right-wing Abe friend, internal affairs minister Sanae Takaichi.

Those close connections to Abe and the LDP power structure are especially valued in Fukui, which faces particularly difficult social and economic choices in the years ahead. The central government is predicting that the prefecture's population, currently numbering about 790,000, will drop to 760,000 by 2020 and to only 633,000 by 2040.

"Social welfare policies, economic recovery, and bringing back younger people while taking care of older people are all issues on voters' minds. Compared to urban areas, however, it's probable that Fukui will see a higher voter turnout, due to concerns about these issues and the traditional ties that exist between the LDP and Fukui communities," said Akio Takezawa, a local LDP official. Each year, the prefecture estimates at least 2,000 younger residents leave Fukui for work or school, and in recent years, only about 20 percent of the latter have returned after graduation. Getting more to return has long been recognized as the key to economic recovery, but neither of the front-runners has offered much in the way of detailed strategies to achieve this goal.

Inada has offered only vague proposals to address the issue, urging creation of policies targeting young people that would lure them back to the prefecture in order to work, marry and raise families.

"In order to do this, we need policies to persuade Tokyo-based firms to relocate to Fukui and to bring their workers with them," she told supporters at a rally in early December.

For his part, Takagi is only slightly more specific.

"For example, one way to get younger people back would be to create public works projects designed to reduce or prevent natural disasters," he said in a campaign statement, also in early December.

Whoever represents Fukui in the Diet will be expected to push hard for central government approval and financial help to bring the Hokuriku Shinkansen Line to their prefecture as soon as possible. A new route connecting Kanazawa in neighboring Ishikawa Prefecture with Toyama, and then Nagano and Tokyo is expected to open in March. There are plans to extend the line to Tsuruga, in Fukui, by 2025.

But in recent weeks, discussions in the Diet and within Fukui business circles speculate that bullet trains could be running between Tokyo and Tsuruga as early as 2023 if the technical challenges can be overcome and adequate central government funding can be had.

That, in turn, has raised hope in the city of Fukui, which is closer to Kanazawa, that the Fukui-Tokyo section of the shinkansen line might even be ready by 2020, just in time to shuttle Fukui residents to the Tokyo Olympics.

Then there's nuclear power.

Fukui's pro-nuclear camp is pushing not merely for the restart of idled reactors, including those that are over 40 years old, but also for a national energy policy that spells out roughly what percentage of Japan's future electricity supplies should come from atomic power, instead of just accepting the current position that nuclear energy will be an important "base load" source.

Inada, as LDP policy chief, has signaled the Diet will answer this question by spring, although she wouldn't say if the answer will come before or after nationwide local elections.

Before 3/11, Japan had 54 reactors providing 28.6 percent of the nation's electricity. But Fukui's reactors generated just under half of Kansai Electric Power Co.'s electricity in fiscal 2010. Towns in Takagi's second district in particular have received billions of yen in subsidies for hosting the plants.

There is also the problem of aging reactors. Four of Fukui's 13 reactors are already 40 years old and another four are more than 35 years old. By 2030, only two reactors, the Oi plant's units 3 and 4, will be under 40 years.

Official plans still also call for two new Tsuruga reactors originally slated to start operating in 2017 and 2018, but their future is uncertain.

Both Inada and Takagi are facing pressure from Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa and senior prefectural corporate leaders in the pro-nuclear lobby who warn of local economic collapse unless the two candidates and their Diet allies formulate a clear plan of action, including economic assistance from Tokyo, for restarting those reactors that can be restarted and for decommissioning the oldest units.

While voters will be looking to elect candidates they believe will stand the best chance of dealing with these issues in the short term, **it's the longer-term future that has most, regardless of political stance, worried.**

"It's not clear that things are going to get better without fundamental changes, which I don't think any (one) politician can make," said Atsuko Kamado, a Fukui housewife who says she hasn't decided for whom to vote.

Class action against operator: It is possible

December 16, 2014

S. Korea cancer victims bring class action against nuclear operator

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201412160080

REUTERS

SEOUL--A group of South Korean thyroid cancer patients living near nuclear plants have filed the country's first class action suit against the operator, after an October court ruling in favor of a plaintiff claiming a link between radiation and the cancer.

Worries about the safety of nuclear power in the world's fifth-largest user of the energy source have intensified after a 2012 scandal over the supply of reactor parts with fake security certificates, as well as the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan.

A total of 1,336 plaintiffs, including 301 cancer patients living near four nuclear plants, and their families, filed the suit in a court in the southeastern city of Busan against Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Co. (KHNP), part of state-run Korea Electric Power Corp., a statement from a group of environmental organizations representing the plaintiffs said.

"We hope that the relationship between thyroid cancer and nuclear power plants will be proved at court so it will make the government take a full-scale inspection on nuclear energy," Seo Eun-kyung, a lawyer leading the suit, told Reuters.

The suit seeks 15 million won (1.6 million yen) in compensation for each patient and between 1 million won and 3 million won for each family member, an environment group official said.

A KHNP spokesman said the firm believes there is no link between low-level radiation from nuclear power generation that is within government guidelines and thyroid cancer, and said the plaintiffs should have waited until a higher court had ruled on the earlier case after the verdict was appealed.

In October a district court ordered KHNP to pay 15 million won to Park Geum-sun in compensation for her thyroid cancer after she lived about 7.7 kilometers from a nuclear complex for more than 20 years.

Views on the link between nuclear radiation and cancer are mixed. The World Health Organization on its website cites a U.N. report over the Chernobyl accident that no evidence indicates living in known high background radiation areas of the world poses a health risk.

Ye Bu-hae, a 69-year-old rice farmer living less than 5 km from the Kori nuclear plant, joined the class action on Dec. 16 with 66 other thyroid cancer patients in his village, which is home to 3,000 people.

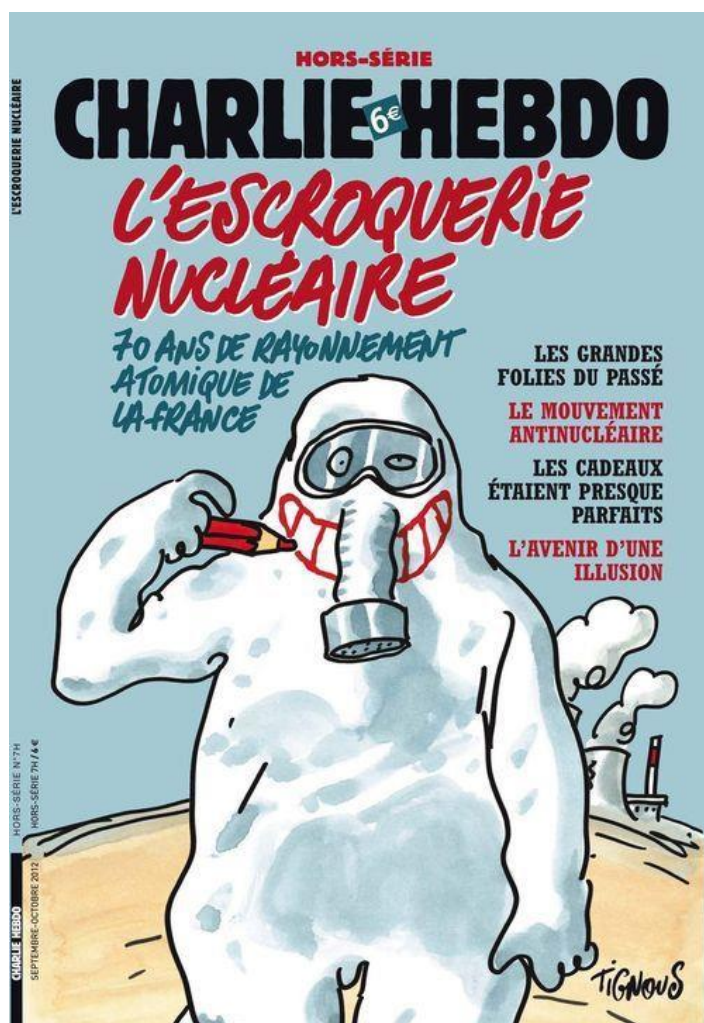
"After seeing too many thyroid cancer cases and Japan's tsunami, we have become more and more scared," Ye, whose wife had surgery for thyroid cancer, told Reuters by phone. "Our action is for our next generation."

South Korea runs 23 nuclear reactors supplying a third of its power, and plans 11 more by 2024.

Massacre at Charlie-Hebdo

Slain cartoonists at Charlie Hebdo were allies of anti-nuclear movement

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/home/2015/1/8/slain-cartoonists-at-charlie-hebdo-were-allies-of-anti-nucle.html>



We pause today to remember those slain at the French satirical news magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. Several of the cartoonists at *Charlie Hebdo* were close allies of the French anti-nuclear movement, even providing cartoons to the French anti-nuclear network, "Sortir du nucléaire." Stéphane Charbonnier, its editor in chief, drew many cartoons lampooning the nuclear industry. (One example is pictured below. It reads: "What could one do without nuclear? Live.") Charb, as he was known by his pen name, participated in opposition to both nuclear power and nuclear weapons. He was among the 12 killed. Another *Hebdo* staffer, Fabrice Nicolino, who was wounded but we are told will survive, was the author of the brilliant special edition of *Charlie Hebdo* focusing on nuclear power and called *The Nuclear Swindle* (cover pictured left). In it, Nicolino, an author and environmental journalist, pointed out that nuclear power is a hold-up, with democracy as the spoils. The assassination of the 12 people at *Charlie Hebdo*, and the injuring of others, was also an assault on democracy. Tens of thousands rallied the same night in Paris and elsewhere, holding vigil for the victims and for freedom (see photo bottom right.)





Music for a nuclear-free world?

January 13, 2015

Nuclear-free world

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/01/13/national/nuclear-free-world-train-experience-kids-scream-love/#.VLTOBXt1Cos>

Crayon House, a multistory building selling children's books, toys and organic products in Tokyo's Omotesando district, has resumed monthly lectures on topics related to nuclear power, "Morning Study of SilentSpring."

Author and screenwriter James Miki will head the discussion for the 55th session this Saturday. On Feb. 28, London-born radio broadcaster Peter Barakan will give **a talk on music's potential role in achieving a nuclear-free world under the title "Can Music Change the World?"**

The lectures will be conducted from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Hiroba, an organic restaurant located in the basement of the same building.

Admission for each lecture is ¥1,000.

Reservations are required and can be made by calling 03-3406-6465 or emailing josei@crayonhouse.co.jp

Nukes and their real cost

POINT OF VIEW/ Eiji Oguma: Planned protective measures show real cost of nuclear power

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/column/AJ201501150006>

SPECIAL TO THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The industry ministry is discussing a new protective measure for nuclear power plants: the contract for difference (CfD) system.

The CfD, introduced in Britain, guarantees that electricity will be purchased at a fixed rate over a certain period of time.

The purchase price is calculated in consideration of the plant's total cost, including future expenses, such as those for disposing of spent nuclear fuel and decommissioning reactors.

An agreement has been reached to apply the system to one nuclear power plant in Britain, with the reference purchase price set at 8.95 pence (around 15 yen or \$0.13) per kilowatt-hour. That is higher than the corresponding price for a land-based wind farm, and comes with a longer guarantee period of 35 years.

A nuclear plant requires so much initial investment that there is no guarantee the cost will be recovered under the market economy. That is why the CfD and other protective measures for nuclear plants are being discussed in Japan ahead of the liberalization of the power retail market slated for 2016.

But various objections have been raised to the introduction of such measures.

First, the purchase price will likely be reflected in electricity rates, increasing the financial burden on consumers.

An article on the "real cost of nuclear power" that appeared in the December issue of the Sentaku monthly magazine introduces an expert's view: "Calculations show that applying the nuclear CfD to existing nuclear plants (in Japan) would result in total annual dues of more than 3 trillion yen, which is worth **about the same as payments for alternative fuels within the current electricity rates.**"

"Alternative fuels" refer to fossil fuels for thermal power plants that have substituted nuclear plants idled after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011.

The article also quoted a senior official of a major manufacturer as saying: "There would be no advantage in resuming nuclear power generation if the rates were to be higher, although I don't know about companies involved in building nuclear reactors.

"We would have no choice but to sharply increase in-house power generation if the CfD were to be introduced."

Second, the decision process is not transparent.

Representatives of power utilities and nuclear industry sit as "expert members" on the Nuclear Energy Subcommittee, where the discussions are being held. The panel falls under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy.

According to environmental economist Kenichi Oshima's article in the December issue of the Sekai monthly magazine, live video broadcasts of panel meetings, which were available in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, are no longer shown, and records of the first six meetings have never been released, even in audio format.

Audio records alone have been released for the seventh and subsequent meetings, but they are designated for "temporary availability until the minutes are published."

The article said the chairman of the Nuclear Energy Subcommittee said the meetings are not broadcast live because "some members say such a setting would not help them express their opinions."

Third, such measures would give an advantage to power utilities that fail to reform their operations.

According to a special feature on power industry realignment in the Oct. 11 issue of Shukan Diamond weekly magazine, Chubu Electric Power Co. has long sought to enhance the efficiency of thermal power generation, and Tokyo Electric Power Co. also “decided to define thermal power operations as a pillar of growth” following the disaster at its Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

Both utilities are seeking to integrate their fuel procurement operations to reduce their international procurement prices for liquefied natural gas.

The special feature said Kansai Electric Power Co., on the other hand, adheres to its traditional focus on nuclear power operations as if to “commit a double suicide with nuclear power.”

Policy measures that favor an old guard management policy and fail to reward efforts to meet the demands of current times would not help to open up a new future for energy.

Nontransparent protective measures that lack consensus would only create dependence and harm sound efforts.

Tatsuya Murakami, former mayor of the village of Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, known for having hosted nuclear plants, says “everybody stops making efforts” and “other industries stop growing” once a community hosts a nuclear plant.

In an interview published in the Feb. 6 edition of Diamond Online (<http://diamond.jp/articles/-/48302>), he said, “Clothing shops, for example, are not looking toward the village residents. They can get along by just buying in and selling work clothes and shoes for nuclear plant workers.

Murakami said the same can be said of inns.

“They are intended for nuclear plant workers, so you sleep crowded together and use a joint bath,” he said. “I used to say they have to remodel their rooms, say, into private rooms, but nobody has come forward to do so. Everybody says, ‘I don’t care about remodeling. Workers are coming, after all.’”

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took part in a debate of political party leaders on Dec. 1, the day before the official start of the campaign for the Lower House election.

According to the Dec. 2 issue of The Asahi Shimbun, the prime minister said: “It is all too natural for the public to feel they are fed up with nuclear power. At the same time, we have the responsibility to provide a stable supply of inexpensive energy.”

I want Abe to explain if nuclear plants need to be protected, given that power utilities and the industry ministry have virtually admitted that nuclear power is anything but “inexpensive.”

Journey Without End



January 27, 2015

Mom's anti-nuclear stance inspires film

Documentary maker travels the world to get the big picture

by Keiji Hirano

Kyodo

In the days of uncertainty immediately following the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, documentary filmmaker Masako Sakata turned to a book written by her late mother, an anti-nuclear campaigner, to try to make sense of what was happening.

The book, "Please Listen," is a collection of newsletters in which Shizuko Sakata continued to warn of the dangers of nuclear power as an ordinary person living in the quiet city of Suzaka, Nagano Prefecture. The 3/11 disaster "prompted me to think back about what my mother had tried to tell her neighbors," Sakata said.

While rereading her mother's words, Sakata repeatedly visited Fukushima with her camera to record the catastrophic situation developing there, bringing with her the old radiation detector her mother used. It was during one visit, with the detector's alarm ringing loudly in her ears, that she came up with the idea of visiting the Marshall Islands in the Pacific, where many residents have been unable to return to their homes for decades due to U.S. atomic and hydrogen bomb tests.

"I thought I could find clues to the future of Fukushima's people by researching the history and current situation facing the islanders," Sakata said.

In search of footage, she also traveled to Kazakhstan, where the Soviet Union conducted 470 nuclear tests throughout the Cold War, and Cap de la Hague, France, home to a spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, where she met residents opposed to nuclear power.

The round-the-world trip evolved into her latest film, "Journey Without End."

In the Marshall Islands, some displaced people have filed a lawsuit against the U.S. government to seek compensation and decontamination of their homeland.

“We spent a lot of time dreaming about our homeland,” an islander says in the film. “But negative feelings always surge up within us, telling us that we will never see our islands again.”

The March 1954 hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands also involved a Japanese tuna fishing boat.

Matashichi Oishi, one of the 23 crew members of the Fukuryu Maru No. 5, says in the film that “white flakes that looked like snow fell heavily” after the explosion. He called it “death ash.”

“They fell on our bodies. They were not hot, and they had no smell. We licked some that fell around our mouth, but they had no taste.”

Six months later, chief radio operator Aikichi Kuboyama died at the age of 40.

“When the Bikini incident happened, all of us should have learned more about nuclear energy. Then there would not have been 54 nuclear reactors built in Japan,” Oishi says.

“We were repeatedly told it is safe, no need to worry, we’ll have lots of power. . . . Not knowing the danger, people wanted nuclear plants in their towns and villages,” he says. “We could have found a different way had we all studied more about the Bikini incident then. I regret it very much.”

In a village in Kazakhstan around 50 km from the epicenter of a nuclear test, many people die before reaching the age of 60, while in a city around 150 km from another test site, researchers are studying the effects of low-dose radiation exposure, given that the cancer death rate there is higher than in other areas.

“We are paying attention to the effects carried over to the next generation,” a doctor in the city is quoted in the movie as saying. “Our ancestors were stronger. People today have much weaker immune systems.” Sakata’s mother, Shizuko, issued her first mimeographed newsletter in May 1977 after receiving a letter from her eldest daughter, Yuko, who was living with her British husband on an island in the English Channel and had reported local concerns over radioactive pollution due to the spent fuel reprocessing plant in Cap de la Hague on the nearby French coast.

In the first issue, Shizuko argued that accumulating radioactive waste should not be left to future generations to deal with, calling for people today “not to make our children and grandchildren lament.” She handed out her newsletter on the streets of her hometown to passers-by, asking them, “Could you listen to me?”

Members of an anti-nuclear NGO in la Hague who regularly measure radioactivity density expressed concerns in the film that radioactive contamination may be spreading widely in Northern Europe.

“Imagine if we had found radioactive elements in the pyramids in Egypt,” the NGO’s leader says to draw attention to the exceptionally long half-life of the buried uranium and the burden it will impose on future generations.

Another NGO member tells Sakata that **people in la Hague remain unwilling to confront the danger of radiation as nuclear facilities have brought employment as well as a lot of money to build roads, a big swimming pool and even a planetarium.**

The film shows Shizuko attending a roundtable discussion on nuclear power policy organized by the Japanese government in May 1996, 2½ years before her death. She expressed her views there following a sodium coolant leak leading to a fire at the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in 1995.

“When nuclear power was first introduced, the future looked bright, but now we see the negative side clearly,” she said at the forum. **“Nuclear power has been a national policy, but circumstances have changed. National policy can be misguided, as we learned during the war.”**

Looking back on her travels around the world, Sakata said her “journey to inquire about the nuclear age has just begun,” noting that the development of both nuclear energy and weapons continues “despite the wartime disasters faced by Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as the Fukushima accident.”

Sakata previously made two award-winning documentaries: “Agent Orange — A Personal Requiem,” in 2007, focusing on the damage caused by Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War, and “Living the Silent Spring” in 2011, about the danger chemical agents pose to humanity. Her latest film will be screened at a Tokyo theater in March before being shown nationwide. **A version in which Sakata provides an English narration has also been created to present at international film festivals and other occasions.**

For further information, call the film’s distributor, Siglo Ltd., at 03-5343-3101.

Plans to restart Takahama "riddled with flaws"

February 12, 2015

Protesters demand more explanation

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150212_24.html

Feb. 12, 2015 - Updated 04:54 UTC+1

Protesters have called on Japan's nuclear regulator to further discuss safety measures before approving the restart of the Takahama plant's 2 reactors.

Over 30 people gathered on Thursday in front of a Tokyo building where the Nuclear Regulation Authority held its meeting.

They said **regulators have not assessed evacuation plans for residents in the event of an accident** and have not fully explained details of the restart to residents.

They stressed **plans to restart the facility are riddled with flaws and that further debate is needed.**

The leader of the citizens group said residents are being neglected in the process. He said Takahama nuclear plant is not fit to be restarted.

Hikari no Ryu

February 11, 2015

Children's picture book uses dragon as metaphor for nuclear power

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201502110010>



A page from "Hikari no Ryu" depicts toxins flowing from a dragon's belly that engulf a village. (Provided by Miyuki Ono)

By AKEMI HARADA/ Staff Writer

Nuclear power is not mentioned in the children's picture book "Hikari no Ryu" (The dragon of light), but there's no mistaking the ominous message of a happy tale turned tragic by an unanticipated quirk of nature.

The book, which features a dragon as a metaphor for nuclear power, provokes readers to ponder the prickly issue of nuclear power generation in the aftermath of the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in 2011.

"The issue of nuclear power tends to divide the public," said Miyuki Ono, a freelance writer who put together "Hikari no Ryu." "I am hoping that the book will become a catharsis for children and parents to contemplate what went wrong with nuclear power, rather than debating the pros and cons of the issue." The book, published by Ehonjuku Publishing Co. in Tokyo, revolves around a dragon that was brought to one of the kingdom's villages.

When the dragon gobbles a special stone, it emits the light of seven colors. The illumination brightens the night, keeps villagers warm in winter and sets a factory in motion.

"This dragon is the god," the king declares.

The village flourishes.

Subsequently, state ministers and merchants keep forcing the dragon to consume more stones, although it appears to be causing it great pain.

One day, lightning strikes the dragon's stable, rupturing the beast's swollen belly. Toxins flow from its injured stomach, engulfing the village and forcing villagers to flee to another village.

One of the evacuees, a boy, asks the question: "What went wrong?"

Is it the king's fault? Or the state ministers'? Or the merchants'? Or all the villagers who wanted to have a source of light?

Ono, 29, usually writes travel and interview pieces.

But she decided to publish a picture book on nuclear power generation as she feared that following the Fukushima disaster, many parents are anxious about the issue of nuclear power and feel that their knowledge of the question is limited.

So, Ono launched an online fund-raising campaign in March 2012 to fund the project.

She raised about 700,000 yen (\$5,932) from 203 people, more than the target of 430,000 yen.

She also turned to the Internet to enlist staff members for the project. Kyoko Hidaka, an illustrator, did the drawings.

Ono interviewed a wide range of people, including evacuees, scientists and engineers in the nuclear industry, in working on the plot.

Listening to them made her realize the enormity of the question she was trying to tackle in a picture book.

"It turned out to be more complicated and larger than I had thought," she said. "I was at a loss."

After thinking long and hard about it, she decided not to provide an answer to the boy's question: "What went wrong?"

"It seemed dangerous to pin the blame just on certain people," Ono said.

The picture book was completed in March. The online version, with background music, was released in July at a cost of 800 yen, while a print version was put out in December, priced at 1,404 yen.

Born in the capital, Ono has been a user of electricity generated at the beleaguered plant, which was operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co., a utility that serves the Tokyo metropolitan area.

"Many people have begun to feel uncomfortable discussing the nuclear issue because it is contentious," she said. "But I am going to continue to pay close attention to the nuclear issue as a Tokyo resident who has benefited from electricity generated in Fukushima."

Ono will donate part of the proceeds from sales of the picture book to the Great East Japan Earthquake Recovery Initiatives Foundation, an entity tasked with supporting the rebuilding of the Tohoku region.

For more information about the picture book, call Ehonjuku Publishing at 03-5269-2891.

Neighbours also concerned about restart

February 13, 2015

Bid to restart Fukui nuke reactors faces challenges from neighboring prefectures

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150213p2a00m0na011000c.html>

With the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at Takahama Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture having passed safety inspections, efforts to bring them back online are now shifting toward obtaining consent from local residents -- an effort that could become complicated as neighboring Kyoto and Shiga prefectures demand involvement.

Before proceeding to obtain consent, Fukui prefectural officials will first finalize matters such as approving construction plans, and confirming the intent of the local government in the town of Takahama, where the plant is located.

Accident-related contingency plans must be formulated for locales within a 30-kilometer radius of nuclear power plants, and because this encompasses parts of both Kyoto and Shiga prefectures in the case of the Takahama plant, it may run into some roadblocks.

Kyoto Gov. Keiji Yamada asked on Feb. 12 that plant operator Kansai Electric Power Co. and the Nuclear Regulation Authority provide a "thorough explanation" regarding plans for the reactors. While Kyoto Prefecture had provided basic consent to sign a new safety agreement with the Kansai power company in January, this was limited to the restart of reactors on the occasion of new expansion projects and following accidents -- and thus did not cover the present matter of the Takahama plant restart. The proposed agreement includes the right to express safety-related opinions, while also requiring Kansai Electric Power Co. to provide explanations and information to the seven municipalities within the 30-kilometer radius of the Takahama plant. In some cases, Kansai Electric's responsibility to inform municipalities in Kyoto may be greater than the same responsibility the utility has to towns and cities within Fukui Prefecture's borders.

The pact has no stipulations on the "right to consent" that Kyoto Prefecture sought in the beginning, however. Based on the events leading up to this point, Kansai Electric prioritized its relationship with the government of the municipality where the plant is located.

Because the Kyoto prefectural city of Maizuru lies within a 5-kilometer radius of the Takahama plant, which would necessitate immediate evacuation in the event of an accident, prefectural officials had emphasized that it put the city "on the same level as the municipality where the plant is located."

Shiga Gov. Taizo Mikazuki has once again asked Kansai Electric to sign an agreement with respect to the Takahama plant, commenting, "There is no way that a restart can take place without a safety accord." The situation remains stalled, however, as Mikazuki waits for the Kansai power company's next move concerning the "right to consent."

With the possibility that Kyoto Prefecture's draft agreement will set a precedent, former Shiga Gov. Yukiko Kada -- whose stance while in office was one of "graduating from nuclear power" -- stated in no uncertain terms that "Mikazuki should seek an accord that is on the same level with the municipality where the plant is located, as he stated in his campaign promise."

The position of Fukui prefectural and Takahama town officials is that the scope of local consent should be limited to the municipality where the plant is located. Takahama town mayor Yutaka Nose commented, "I take very seriously the fact that the safety (of the reactors) has been confirmed."

Nose has indicated that he will assess the matter of consent based upon the discussions set to take place among the local council in March, as well as upon the national government's support for compiling a disaster prevention plan. He intends to explain the situation to local citizens by way of a public program broadcast via cable television.

Meanwhile, Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa has made known his view that "the responsibility for providing explanations to residents lies with the national government and the power company."

Nishikawa commented on Feb. 12, "The national government should provide a clear explanation to citizens regarding the importance of nuclear power."

February 13, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Residents near Takahama nuclear plant concerned over restart of reactors

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150213p2a00m0na006000c.html>

Residents of Kyoto and Shiga prefectures, who live within 30 kilometers of Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, expressed their concerns over the safety of the facility after idled reactors at the nuclear plant recently passed a screening test based on new safety standards.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority approved Kansai Electric Power Co.'s new safety measures against possible earthquakes, tsunami and other disasters on Feb. 12. The utility is looking to restart the No. 3 and 4 reactors at Takahama nuclear plant as early as November this year after the approval of construction plans and safety regulations.

Yoshio Tani, 73, chief of Matsuo district in Maizuru, Kyoto Prefecture, which is located in a "precautionary action zone" -- areas within 5 kilometers from the Takahama plant that require instant evacuation in case of disaster -- says the move to sign a safety agreement with Kansai Electric is making progress. At the same time he says, "I want the utility to restart the reactors after technology to eliminate radiation is developed."

"The prefectural and municipal governments could have been more demanding about their right to consent (to the utility's resumption plans)," Tani added.

Designer Yosuke Yamamoto, 38, moved from Osaka to the city of Ayabe in Kyoto Prefecture, which is located about 14 kilometers from the Takahama plant.

"I moved here to start a life in the countryside, but I wonder if I should continue living here after seeing how Kansai Electric and the government are moving toward restarting the reactors," Yamamoto said.

Seventy-three-year-old Naomichi Kumagai, a resident of Adogawa in the city of Takashima, Shiga Prefecture, which is located near the border of Fukui Prefecture, claimed that if a nuclear disaster broke out, Lake Biwa would be contaminated and it would affect many local residents.

February 13, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

More eyes needed

February 14, 2015

EDITORIAL: Bring more parties aboard in reactor restart process

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201502140047>



Citizens protest restarting of reactors at the Takahama nuclear power plant at a rally in Kyoto on Feb. 12. (The Asahi Shimbun)

The Nuclear Regulation Authority has formally approved an application by Kansai Electric Power Co. to restart the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at its Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The decision means that the two offline reactors meet its safety standards.

This is the second time the NRA has endorsed the safety of reactors under tighter standards introduced after the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear crisis in March 2011. Two reactors at Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture have also been granted the safety clearance.

The focus will now be on whether local governments in the vicinity give their consent. However, there is no law stating which prefectures and municipalities should be involved in the process.

With regard to the Sendai plant, Kagoshima Governor Yuichiro Ito decreed that only Kagoshima prefectural authorities and the facility's host city of Satsuma-Sendai should have any say.

The Abe administration decided to use the Sendai plant as a template for its push to bring idled reactors back online. In line with this policy, Kansai Electric and Fukui Governor Issei Nishikawa intend to seek the consent of only the prefecture and the town of Takahama for the restart.

The Fukushima nuclear disaster brutally underscored the reality that a severe accident can affect vast areas.

Allowing reactors to be restarted under the regulatory framework in place before the outbreak of the crisis is simply unacceptable.

The current approach for local government consent covers only the prefecture and the host municipality. Instead of treating this as an established system, the government should redefine the scope of local governments concerned before reactors are brought back online.

For instance, the city of Maizuru, Kyoto Prefecture, is within five kilometers of the Takahama plant. This means residents of the city would have to be evacuated immediately if there was a major accident at the plant.

Eight municipalities in Kyoto and Shiga prefectures lie within 30 km of the facility. These local governments are required by the state to compile evacuation plans for nuclear emergencies. The total population of the eight municipalities exceeds 120,000. This compares with 50,000 or so people living in the Fukui Prefecture area of the 30-km zone.

The NRA is also assessing the safety of the Oi plant in Fukui Prefecture, the Genkai plant in Saga Prefecture, the Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture, the Shimane plant in Shimane Prefecture and the Shika plant in Ishikawa Prefecture. All of these facilities lie close to neighboring prefectures.

A key indicator of the government's stance toward this issue will be the scope of the local governments involved in the process of restarting the two reactors at the Takahama plant.

MORE 'EYES' NEEDED

The requisite consent from local governments hosting nuclear plants for operating reactors is based on safety agreements between these governments and the plant operators.

As many nuclear power plants were constructed in the 1970s onward, the number of problems with the facilities has increased. Yet, crucial information about these problems was tightly controlled by the plant operators and the central government, with local governments concerned often left out of the loop.

This prompted host governments to strike deals with the operators of nuclear plants to demand relevant information so that they can closely monitor safety aspects from the standpoint of local residents.

For instance, agreements between Fukui Prefecture and operators of nuclear plants in the prefecture include a provision that allows local governments to demand the suspension of a reactor under certain circumstances, as well as a clause requiring advance discussions before restarting reactors after a serious incident.

The prefectures acquired these rights through persistent negotiations with the operators following every incident and glitch along the way.

Since the Fukushima disaster, which has made residents of municipalities around nuclear plants uneasy about the safety of the facilities, many local governments across the nation have started calling for similar agreements with plant operators.

Kansai Electric, however, has been reluctant to respond to these calls.

The utility is currently in talks with Kyoto Prefecture for a new agreement, but refuses to accede to the prefecture's call for the right to consent.

Fukui Governor Nishikawa supports this stance, stressing that host governments have been assuming related "responsibilities and risks."

Host governments are probably wary about giving a say to local governments that are not as deeply involved in nuclear plant-related matters.

However, the participation of surrounding governments in the process of deciding whether to restart reactors would lead to a broader scope of safety monitoring through a greater number of eyes.

Host governments have acquired the right to look into the safety of the nuclear plants on their own and, should they decide, refuse to approve plans to restart reactors if there are safety concerns. They should share this privilege with surrounding local governments to widen the scope of local communities that have a say in the matter.

CONSENT OF 30-KM ZONE

The three prefectures of Fukui, Kyoto and Shiga, as well as municipalities concerned, have worked out evacuation plans for broad areas in accordance with the central government's nuclear disaster-response guidelines. However, work has barely started on coordinating details to ensure the evacuations will be carried out properly.

If a serious nuclear incident occurs in Fukui Prefecture, more than 100,000 people in the three prefectures may have to be evacuated, mainly to the Kansai region.

Such a scenario conjures up images of major traffic snarls and serious confusion. Many issues need to be sorted out, including how to secure buses for evacuations.

In January, the Union of Kansai Governments, which groups seven prefectures and four designated cities, called on the central government to get actively involved in efforts to ensure the effectiveness of wide-area evacuation plans.

Until the central government commits itself to this task, the union warned, there is little likelihood that calls to restart the Takahama reactors will be accepted.

Operators of nuclear plants planning to restart reactors should be required to gain prior consent from all local governments responsible for the safety of residents during nuclear emergencies.

For the time being, the local government consent program should cover all areas within 30 km of nuclear plants, in line with the emergency evacuation zones defined by the government's nuclear disaster-response guidelines.

It may also be advisable to consider providing a legal basis in the future for the requirement of local consent, which is currently based only on agreements between plant operators and local governments. This step would help remind nuclear plant operators that this is a process of great gravity.

REUNITING LOCAL TIES

When two reactors at the Oi plant were restarted in 2012, local government heads in the Kansai region, which uses electricity produced at the plant, temporarily expressed their opposition to the move. As a result, Fukui Prefecture became isolated.

The one-sided push against the restart of the reactors caused Fukui Prefecture to develop deep-rooted distrust of local governments in areas that consume electricity generated by the facility.

It is essential to make fresh efforts to overcome the conflict of interests and reunite the relationships among the broader range of local communities concerned.

We suggest the central government take the lead by coordinating talks among the governors of Fukui and Kansai prefectures, along with the mayors of municipalities within 30 km of the plant, to build consensus on the scope and rights of local governments involved.

There is a raft of problems that need to be resolved through cooperation between areas where nuclear plants are located and those that consume the electricity the sites produce. These include, for instance, where to store spent nuclear fuel rods piled up in storage pools at nuclear plants and how to support local communities that would lose their main revenue source when aged nuclear plants are decommissioned. This process will undoubtedly require a great deal of time and effort. But sufficient time should be spent on tackling the challenges presented by the harrowing incident at the Fukushima plant.

The future of nuclear power generation is a question that should be answered through national debate.

We are eager to see Fukui and Kansai take a first step in this direction together.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Feb. 14

No dark side to German "Energiewende"

Nuclear future

Source : RENEWECONOMY

<http://reneweconomy.com.au/2015/the-myth-of-the-dark-side-of-germanys-energiewende-94542>

The myth of the dark side of Germany's Energiewende

By Conrad Kunze and Paul Lehmann on 18 February 2015

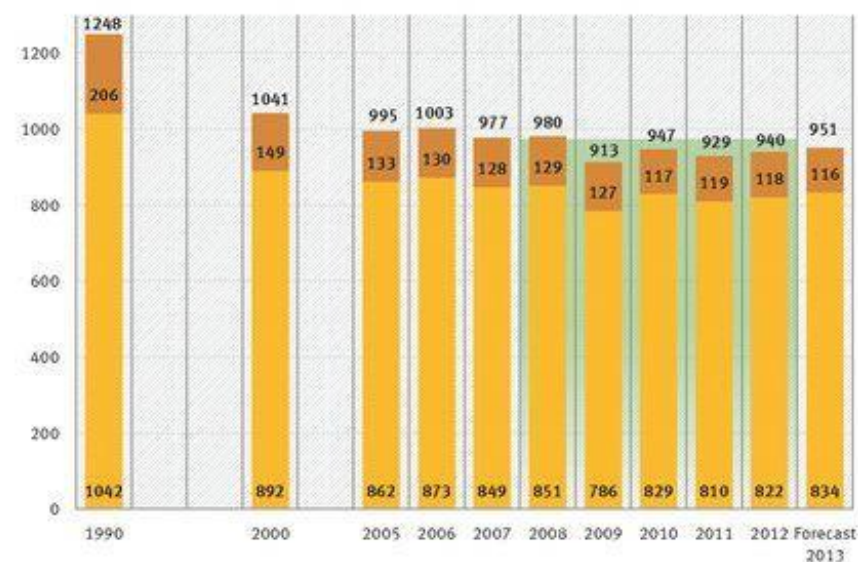
Energy Post

Critics of renewable energy have mocked the Energiewende, claiming that it has led to an increase in coal power and related CO₂ emissions in Germany. But Conrad Kunze and Paul Lehmann of the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ show that this is a myth. German coal generation and CO₂ emissions rose not because of but in spite of the Energiewende. They would have been even higher if Germany had not phased out its nuclear power and embarked on its remarkable renewable energy path. "There is no dark side to the Energiewende".

The Energiewende has come in for a good share of mockery in the international media, especially in the Anglo-Saxon and French press. It was widely reported that CO₂ emissions in Germany, famous for its anti-nuclear stance and multibillion-euro renewable energy programme, increased in 2013 (and 2012). True enough, in 2013 German emissions – although still well below the levels of 1990 and 2000 – did rise by 1.5% (see Figure 1). And the reason for this was the growth in Germany's coal-fired power generation (see Figure 2).

Greenhouse gas emissions in Germany, 1990 - Forecast 2013

In Mt CO₂ equivalents



— Kyoto budget — CO₂ emissions — Total non-CO₂ (CH₄, N₂O, F-gases)

Source: © UBA Emissions situation (Date: 23.02.2014)

Figure 1: Historic CO2 Emissions in Germany

Source: Umweltbundesamt 2014

Most commentators swiftly linked this trend – increases in CO₂ emissions and coal-fired power generation – to Germany's energy transition. National Geographic wrote in February 2014: "Some blame the return of coal on the imminent end of Germany's nuclear power industry".[1] In the same month, the New York Times agreed: "But Germany's sudden hunger for coal has emerged as the dirty side of Ms. Merkel's ambitions to shut down the country's nuclear power plants by 2022 and eventually move Germans mostly to renewable energy."[2] And the Guardian repeated the story in August, embellishing the claim by specifically making a nuclear-lignite connection: "Lignite (...) consumption in Europe has remained stable since the late 1990s, but grew slightly over the past few years on the back of high gas prices and the scaling back of nuclear power in Germany."[3]

Is this narrative true? Has the *Energiewende* really caused a coal binge in Germany?

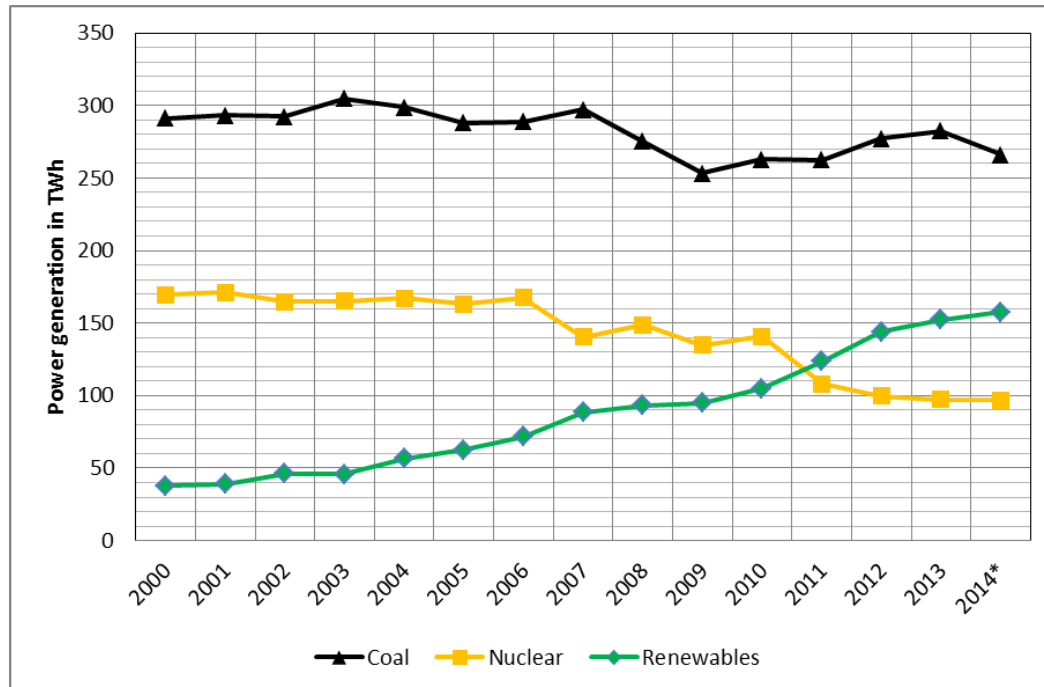


Figure 2: Development of power generation from coal (lignite and hard coal), nuclear and renewable energy sources (in terrawatt-hours, 2014 data partly estimated)

Source: Based on data from AG Energiebilanzen e.V., 2014

Renewables closed the nuclear gap

The narrative of Germany's dirty *Energiewende* rests on the idea that renewables could not live up to their promise to fill the gap of retiring nuclear reactors. Consequently, that gap needed to be closed by power generation from coal.

But if we look at the figures we get quite a different picture. The yellow line in Figure 2 above depicts how the amount of electricity from nuclear declined from 2000 to 2014. Due to the decommissioning of old plants, nuclear power had been declining steadily. When the German government decided on the phase-out, in 2011, some nuclear power stations were shut down immediately and the output went down more quickly. Afterwards, the steady decline continued once more.

The green line shows the steady rise of renewable energy in the same period. In 2011, more electric energy was provided from renewable sources than from all nuclear facilities. In 2014, renewables

achieved a share of approximately 29% in total electricity generation. So renewables have substituted the falling nuclear production in terms of total annual power generation and are very likely to continue doing so until 2022 when the last nuclear plant will be shut down.

Certainly, this observation needs to be interpreted with care. Due to the intermittency of wind and solar energies, power generation from renewables does not always correspond to that of nuclear. Even if renewables can compensate for the reduction in nuclear power generation on an annual basis, there may be shortages throughout the year when the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining. Such gaps need to be closed by power generation from other sources.

Yet, it is not necessarily coal-fired power plants that fill this breach nor nuclear reactors, which are too inflexible. Natural-gas fired power plants are more suitable since they can be ramped up more quickly than coal-fired power plants – and may therefore be better suited to respond to sudden changes in renewables supply. So there is no proof that it was coal power which was expanded when renewable energies were not available.

Firing coal for exported electricity

But we know that coal generation did increase in 2012 and 2013. Why was that if not to make up for renewable shortfalls? There is in fact a ready explanation. As renewables and coal increased, and nuclear dropped, overall power generation in Germany increased from 613 to 633 terrawatt-hours (TWh) from 2011 to 2013. Did Germans use that much more energy then? No! In fact, domestic power consumption declined during the same period!

Figure 3, which shows power exports and imports, throws light on the question. The blue line in the graph depicts the amount of imported electricity in TWh. From 2000 to 2007 imports stayed level, despite a brief increase. The red line stands for the amount of exported energy. In 2002 exports started to rise steeply and stayed well above the blue line. In other words, since 2002 Germany has been an electricity exporting country. It also imports, but exports exceed imports.

There is a drop in power exports in 2011, the year in which the decision to phase out nuclear was taken. But even with that reduced production capacity in 2011, Germany still exported more than 50 TWh. The country has never become an electricity importer again, despite the nuclear phase-out.

More importantly, since 2012, exports have been thriving! We may deduce, then, that the German coal binge is related to the increase in overall power generation and exports, not to the *Energiewende* as such.

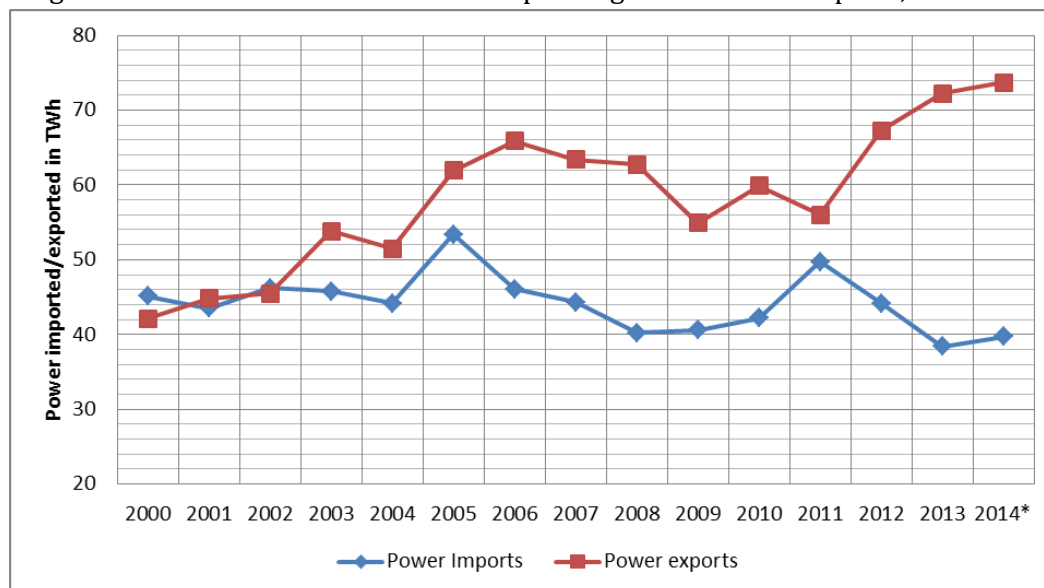


Figure 3: Power imported to and exported from Germany (in terrawatt-hours, 2014 data partly estimated)

Source: Based on data from AG Energiebilanzen e.V., 2014

The coal binge is global, not German

So why has coal generation been thriving? The actual story has got little to do with the German *Energiewende*, and a lot with international markets. In fact, the cost of generating power from coal has declined over the past years. World market coal prices have dropped significantly by more than 30% since 2011 (see Figure 4). As the International Energy Agency points out in its recent Medium-Term Coal Market Report, prices have been driven down by a large oversupply of coal, partly as a result of the shale gas boom in the United States, but also thanks to increasing production capacities in Asia.

What is more, the prices of CO₂ allowances, which need to be held by the operators of fossil-fuelled power plants, have collapsed – from 15-17 Euro per tonne of CO₂ in 2011 to 5-7 Euro in 2014.

Both effects – the drop in coal and CO₂ allowance prices – have made coal an extremely profitable fuel for power generation. Notably, both developments happened in 2011, the year of the nuclear phase-out. Given Germany's large stock of existing coal-fired power plants, it is no surprise that coal-fired power generation and exports have increased significantly since then. It is thus obvious that the German coal binge has been primarily driven by the developments in international fuel and carbon markets – and hardly, if at all, by Germany's energy transition. Most likely, it would have occurred in the same way if Germany had not phased out nuclear and promoted renewables.

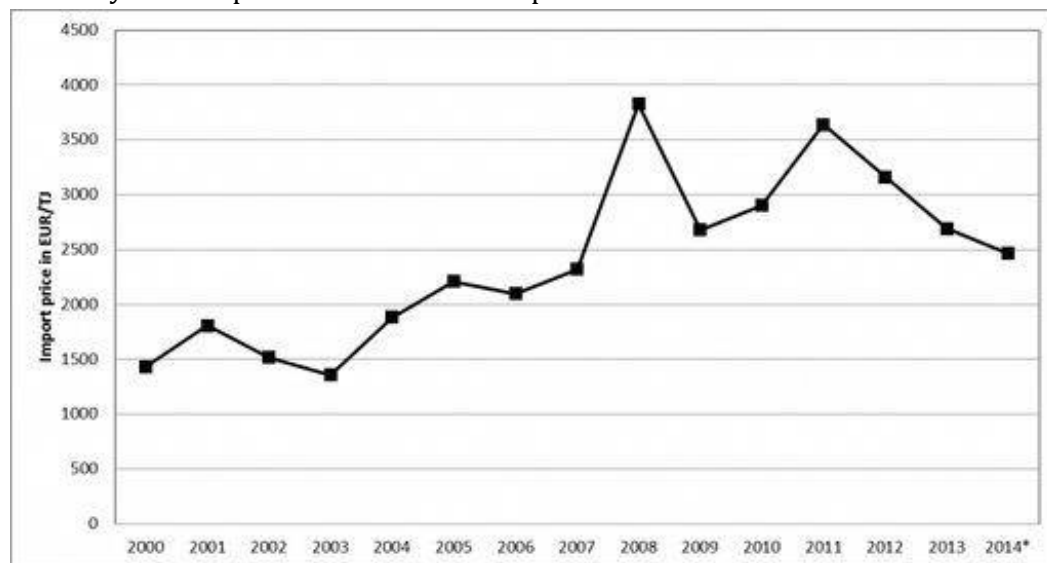


Figure 4: German import price for hard coal (in Euro/terrajoule, 2014 data estimated)

Source: Based on data from BAFA, 2014.

Promoting the *Energiewende* by phasing out coal

Many observers simply don't believe that it's possible for a modern industrial nation to phase out both nuclear and fossil power plants, as the *Energiewende* is aiming to do. In that sense the *Energiewende* has become a great test case for the possibility of a post-fossil *and* post-nuclear energy economy. Is it passing that test?

If the German *Energiewende* rests on these two pillars – getting rid of the old nuclear-fossil power plants and setting up new, renewable capacity – the second one is certainly holding up. Renewables rose to an

all-time high of 27.7% of electricity production in October 2014 and for the first time beat lignite (26.2%) as the main source for electricity generation.[4]

The other pillar, however, is only half-standing. Nuclear plants are gradually shutting down, but what is missing is a mechanism to retire the coal industry. The most effective and efficient means to do so would be the tightening of the European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), e.g. by reducing the overall emissions cap or by implementing a price floor. Admittedly, this option may be limited due to political objections from some Member States, notably Poland. Additional measures, such as a politically mandated phase-out of coal were already considered and rejected in the political discourse.

Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel, responsible for the *Energiewende*, still emphasises the necessity of coal as a bridging technology, to prevent what he has called a “de-industrialisation of Germany”. But the energy industry itself seems to go the other way. In 2014, coal giant RWE was still in financial trouble, the main lignite producer Vattenfall announced its withdrawal from lignite as early as 2015 and Eon has announced its divestment from all coal and nuclear facilities. It is now up to German (and European) policymakers to fully internalise environmental costs in power prices and advance the phasing out of coal.

A temporary coal binge *despite* the *Energiewende*

The French-German TV station Arte commented on the expansion of one open cast lignite mine as “the dark side of the *Energiewende*”. [5] But this is fundamentally wrong: coal generation and related CO₂ emissions have risen despite of, not because of, the *Energiewende* – and presumably would have been even higher without the promotion of renewables.

Recent figures support this argument: Germany’s coal-fired power generation and CO₂ emissions from power generation have started to decline again in 2014, even if the seasonal effect of the relatively warm winter is excluded (AG Energiebilanzen 2014).

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the *Energiewende* is not only about climate change mitigation. It also pursues the overall objective of making power generation more sustainable. It is meant to address quite diverse issues next to climate change, such as nuclear hazards, local environmental problems, fuel import dependency and even a democratisation of the energy economy (Kunze/Becker 2014, Gawel et al. 2014). Consequently, an assessment of the *Energiewende* must not be based on CO₂ reduction only, but on all relevant societal benefits.

In Germany it took a long time for renewable energy not to be portrayed anymore as a niche activity, unable to provide large-scale power. In international debates this notion still seems commonplace.

Mistakenly, as we have tried show.

Concluding that the *Energiewende* has taken the right direction is not to say that it has overcome all major challenges. Important issues still need to be solved, such as safeguarding security of supply with high shares of volatile renewables or mitigating social and ecological conflicts associated with renewables. These are the real challenges that should be spotlighted when discussing the future of the German energy transition, which continues to unfold despite what seems to have been a coal intermezzo.

Source: Energy Transition. Reproduced with permission

"Nuclear plants are like time bombs", says Koizumi

February 18, 2015

Ex-PM Koizumi likens nuclear plants to 'time bombs'

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150218p2g00m0dm026000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who has become a resolute antinuclear campaigner in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima meltdowns, likened nuclear plants in Japan to "time bombs" in reiterating his opposition to nuclear power Tuesday.

"Nuclear plants are like time bombs. They are never safe" in a country where earthquakes are frequent and active volcanoes abound, said Koizumi, who served as prime minister between 2001 and 2006 and retired as a parliamentarian in 2009, in a speech in Tokyo.

Also criticizing the government's push to restart reactors that have cleared new safety regulations, he said, "The government says Japan has the world's toughest safety standards for nuclear plants, but doesn't explain in what points so are they in comparison with those of the United States. It looks too out of it."

All 48 commercial reactors in Japan are currently offline, but Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is pushing for the restart of reactors that have cleared the tighter regulations introduced after the Fukushima crisis, with a total of four reactors obtaining safety clearance from the regulator.

Koizumi established an entity to promote renewable energy last year together with another former prime minister, Morihiro Hosokawa.

240,000\$ back rent for Tokyo anti-nukes

February 26, 2015

Anti-nuke group ordered to pay for occupation

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Feb. 26, 2015 - Updated 13:35 UTC+1

A court has ordered a group of anti-nuclear activists to remove their tents from the premises of the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry and to pay for using the site.

Six months after the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident, the group set up tents at a corner of the ministry's premises in Kasumigaseki, Tokyo. The ministry oversees the country's nuclear power industry.

The group has used the tents as a base for their anti-nuclear campaigns, with its members staying there around the clock.

The government filed a suit with the Tokyo District Court, demanding that leaders of the group remove the tents, which they said are illegally occupying state-owned property.

The government also demanded that the leaders pay more than 20,000 yen, or about 177 dollars, a day for the period from the day the tents were pitched until their removal is complete. The amount is estimated to be 28.9 million yen, or about 240,000 dollars, at present.

Handing down Thursday's ruling at the Tokyo District Court, presiding judge Masatoshi Murakami said the tents have blocked information boards of the ministry, causing inconvenience to visitors. The judge also pointed to a fire that partially burned the tents and said they have given rise to a security risk.

The judge approved almost all of the government's demands, ordering the group to remove the tents and pay for the use of land.

The ministry welcomed the ruling, and expressed hope that the activists will vacate the site as soon as possible.

Taro Fuchikami, who heads the group, told a gathering of supporters that the tents have served as a symbol of Japan's anti-nuclear movements since they were set up 3 and half years ago.

He said the ruling was expected, but disappointing.

Koide's retirement speech

March 2, 2015

Japan Political Pulse: Speaking out against nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20150302p2a00m0na012000c.html>

Hiroaki Koide, assistant professor at the Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute, is set to retire at the end of this month as he has reached the retirement age. A hero of anti-nuclear power advocates, 65-year-old Koide is regarded as a hateful agitator by the pro-nuclear energy camp. Koide labels himself as a loser, who failed to stem nuclear energy.

On Feb. 27, he delivered a speech commemorating his retirement at the research institute in Kumatori, Osaka Prefecture, where he has worked for 41 years. "I will retire in stages," he declared to the audience. "But I won't be backing down that easily," he later commented at a gathering, receiving a round of applause from attendants.

It's been almost four years since the onset of the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster. Koide's continuing popularity must be a reflection of the reality that no one believes in the myth that "the situation is under control" at the crippled Fukushima plant.

Koide wrapped up his 90-minute speech by saying, "I had been foolish enough to dream of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. (Ever since I realized that mistake) I've been hoping to somehow stem it, but the

organization promoting nuclear energy is too colossal, and I've kept losing. I sometimes wonder what on earth I've been living for."

He continued, "But I was able to continue to do what I wanted to. I wasn't ordered by anyone to do something, nor did I order anyone else, as I'm a teacher ranked at the bottom.

"I was fortunate enough to be connected with many of my comrades, and all of you as well. There are so many people who have kept a warm eye on me. I'm really grateful for that. That's about it," he remarked, to generous applause among the audience.

Born in the Tokyo downtown area of Ueno, Koide graduated from the prestigious Kaisei Senior High School and majored in nuclear engineering at Tohoku University's School of Engineering. After having a discussion with opponents to the Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant in Miyagi Prefecture, Koide began to advocate a breakaway from nuclear power.

He has since devoted himself to research for discontinuing nuclear power as a rank-and-file instructor. Setting his eyes on a distant goal, he has never thought about fame and wealth. His obstinate way of living per se is one of the sources of his attraction.

"What are your plans after retirement?" asked one of the 140-strong audience at his Feb. 27 lecture. "I will be a hermit," answered Koide. "Weren't you supposed to fight until nuclear power is eliminated?" another attendant asked, evoking laughter and applause. The emcee -- Koide's fellow researcher Tetsuji Imanaka -- meddled in, saying, "Koide the hermit will keep running." Imanaka, 64, is also an assistant professor at the Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute.

One might assume the number of requests for Koide's lectures has been on the decline now that the movement for breaking away from nuclear power has been losing momentum. Well, that's not the case.

Throughout the end of this coming August, he is booked on all Saturdays and Sundays every other week.

While requests for his speeches come in an endless stream, Koide himself is hoping to gradually cut back on his speech activities.

After delivering so many lectures and publishing numerous books, did he make a fortune? I asked him such a delicate question. After pausing for four seconds, Koide said he did, smiling.

"But I've never offered to give lectures or publish books on my own initiative. I've never desired for anything to own. I've never thought of making money. Most of my clients are poor, so I don't think I've earned as much money as you might think," he said.

According to Koide, if the development of science and technology and the expansion of energy consumption continue further in the same manner as they did over the past 200 years, mankind will be annihilated -- even as early as 100 years from now. We will need to create a society that is viable with reduced energy consumption.

However, the public-private nuclear complex calls for preserving nuclear power on the premise of maintaining and expanding energy consumption. Because this nuclear body puts priority on an affluent appearance, the leakage of water contaminated with high levels of radiation from the Fukushima plant is played down. Are we going to just sit and watch the growth in consumption exterminate the human race? That's a question one doesn't even need to ask. (By Takao Yamada, Senior Expert Writer)

March 02, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Minamisoma: Nuke-free city

March 2, 2015

Minamisoma city pledge to be nuclear-power free

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150302_24.html

Nuclear & Energy

Mar. 2, 2015 - Updated 10:13 UTC+1

The mayor of a city near the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant has pledged to end his city's reliance on nuclear power.

Minamisoma Mayor Katsunobu Sakurai told a city assembly meeting on Monday that he will officially declare the city a nuclear-free zone before the end of the current assembly session.

He said that in place of nuclear energy, he will pursue construction of wind- and solar-power facilities in coastal areas.

He said he hopes to secure all of the city's electricity needs through renewable energies by 2030.

Sakurai said the nuclear accident at the Daiichi plant destroyed nearby communities and many people were forced to leave their homes.

He said he is determined to do all he can to ensure such a disaster never happens again.

More than 60,000 residents of Minamisoma had to evacuate following the March 2011 accident.

Education campaign to start on nuke waste disposal

March 8, 2015

Gov't to hold campaign on nuclear waste disposal sites

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150308p2g00m0dm026000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- The Japanese government is planning to carry out an education campaign in major cities nationwide about the necessity of building facilities for the final disposal of high-level nuclear waste generated at power plants, sources close to the matter said Saturday.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration is looking to restart nuclear plants shut down after the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi accident, and has faced criticism over **promoting nuclear power without resolving where the waste should ultimately be disposed.**

Symposiums are planned for Sapporo, Sendai, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Fukuoka and roughly four other cities, hosted by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry together with the Nuclear Waste Management Organization of Japan, which had previously been solely responsible for the disposal plan. NUMO had held symposiums in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya in the 2013 fiscal year and in 30 of the country's 47 prefectural capitals in the following year, but participation was weak, with an average of 60 people turning up to each symposium.

Its staff will now be joined by ministry officials explaining the disposal plan, as well as representatives of power companies if deemed necessary, the sources said.

The government is also considering launching an **information campaign on social networking services**, with the details to be discussed at an economy ministry task force meeting set for Tuesday, the sources said.

The current disposal policy, adopted in 2008, calls for waste to be vitrified and placed in facilities deep underground. Revisions to the policy at the end of the month are expected to include the selection of candidate sites on scientific grounds, without waiting for local authorities to volunteer to host the facilities.

See also :

Government to start campaign on nuclear waste disposal sites

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/08/national/government-start-campaign-nuclear-waste-disposal-sites/#.VPwwS-F1Cos>



Protesters hold up placards at a rally Sunday in Tokyo to denounce atomic power plants. | AFP-JIJI

Kyodo

The government plans to launch a campaign in major cities to promote the need for permanent disposal facilities for high-level nuclear waste from power plants, sources close to the matter said Saturday. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration is looking to restart nuclear plants shut after the Fukushima disaster, and has faced criticism over promoting nuclear power without resolving where the waste will ultimately be disposed.

Symposiums are planned for Sapporo, Sendai, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Fukuoka and roughly four other cities, hosted by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and the Nuclear Waste Management Organization of Japan, which was previously solely responsible for the disposal plan. The organization had held symposiums in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya in fiscal 2013 and in 30 of the 47 prefectural capitals the following year, but participation was weak, with an average of 60 people turning up to each symposium. [...]

Anti-nuke rally in Tokyo

March 8, 2015

Anti-nuclear rally commemorates Fukushima

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Mar. 8, 2015 - Updated 14:17 UTC+1

Tokyo was the scene of a large anti-nuclear rally on Sunday, a few days before the 4th anniversary of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

The organizers said 23,000 people took part in the demonstration in Tokyo's Hibiya Park. They have held similar demonstrations on or around March 11th for the past 3 years, as well as weekly Friday protests for the past 4 years.

The protesters called for recalling the accident once again, as memories are beginning to fade. They also demanded nuclear-free energy policies and criticized nationwide moves to restart nuclear power plants.

Former astronaut Toyohiro Akiyama once lived in Fukushima Prefecture, where he farmed the land. He said he is one of those who were forced to evacuate. He urged the participants to use anti-nuclear rallies and gatherings as a way to express their anger to lawmakers.

A 69-year-old woman said she feels people, mainly those in Tokyo, are losing interest in the accident. She said she is worried because fewer members of younger generations are taking part in anti-nuclear protests.

The organizers said the number of protesters has decreased by 10,000 each year for the past 3 years.

One of the organizers, Misao Redwolf, said the anti-nuclear movement is at a turning point, as the government has revised its energy policy without nuclear power, and the number of the participants has declined.

She said she wants to continue raising people's awareness of the fact that the effects of the Fukushima accident have not been cleared, and many former residents near the plant remain without sufficient support.

Watanabe's stories of Fukushima

March 9, 2015

FOUR YEARS AFTER: Raw voices from Fukushima's aftermath heard in Tokyo

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201503090059>

By LOUIS TEMPLADO/ AJW Staff Writer

Essayist Ichie Watanabe has heard dozens of life stories from people impacted by the Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear accident that followed, but she has done more than simply writing them down. Instead she has brought the narrators themselves to Tokyo, creating a forum where their raw voices can reach across the growing void between life in the disaster-stricken areas and how it is seen by outsiders. "For many people here in the city, the disaster is beginning to seem like something that happened long ago and far away," says Watanabe, 70. "But for those in Fukushima and other stricken areas, it's still going on every day, even as people pay less attention."

She hosted the first "Fukushima no koe wo kiko!" (I'll hear Fukushima's voice) Tokyo talk session in March 2012. This month marked the 14th gathering.

Among those she has introduced in the past sessions is Shigeki Ota, a Tokyo native who moved to the Hippo district in Marumori, Miyagi Prefecture, in 1995 to run a farm with his family.

"The event gives us a chance to speak directly and give our view of what is happening, which is not always the same as what they learn from the news," Ota says.

Watanabe, who at times works with her husband, the writer Makoto Shiina, first went to Fukushima in July 2011 as a volunteer, working with survivors mainly around the Minami-Soma area.

Because of her age, she says, elderly victims--especially women who found themselves living alone in temporary shelters--opened up more easily to her, and their stories resonated with experiences in her own life.

Born in Manchuria in 1945, Watanabe and her mother were repatriated at war's end to Japan, where the pair found it difficult to settle down in any one place. After she decided to become a writer, Watanabe spent nearly 20 years traveling to Tibet, depicting the lives of Tibetans struggling to maintain their identity while living under Chinese rule.

What she has seen in Fukushima, she says, is not very different from what she has seen in Tibet.

"In both places the people are being told that their lives are being improved, that progress has come and things are moving forward. To a certain extent that's true, but not everyone can walk at the same pace, and those who can't are being left behind," says Watanabe.

In Fukushima, she first set up an e-mail magazine so that residents scattered into temporary housing facilities could read her stories and learn about each others' struggles.

But she felt there was more in her encounters than she could put into words.

"With each article I wrote, I became more aware that I could only express the residents' experiences with words of my choice, and not really deliver what it is I felt directly from their presence," says Watanabe.

"Over the past couple of years, residents have begun to feel abandoned and forgotten, and increasingly have no way of delivering their feelings to the outside world. There are some people whom the media have focused on, but many of the speakers who come here come because they have no other forum."

Among those invited to those sessions are elderly women who to this day live in temporary shelters, increasingly isolated as other residents move out; evacuees who have had to leave their homes but started new lives nearby; and farmers determined to stay where they are.

Ota, 43, has spoken at Fukushima no koe wo kiko! twice.

"When I contacted a pediatrician I knew in Tokyo to ask about how he was reacting to the news 'concerning the effects of the nuclear power plant accident on agricultural products,' I expected to hear him say that there was no need to worry," Ota told the audience when he first spoke at the event. "Instead I learned that he was trying to get his food elsewhere and to not touch our products. On one level I could understand their desire for safety, but at the same time, I was saddened by the call to refuse food from our region."

Looking back on his appearance in Tokyo, Ota adds that mixed feelings remain unresolved even today. "There are many people in Tokyo who can't understand why we stay where we are. Many say we should leave," says Ota, whose farm is located about 50 kilometers from the reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant damaged during the quake and tsunami. He makes miso, which is sold at the event, and is working to turn a disused school in his locale into a senior care facility for his community.

"I want to tell people that we accept the dangers and contradictions of our situation, and also need to feel hope and look forward with our everyday lives. Many people still don't realize that they are responsible for what has happened, and the talk is a chance to remind them."

Often there's a dissonance between what the survivors say and what those far away want to hear, says Watanabe.

"In Tokyo, people believe that they are thinking about the people affected by the disaster when they are actually listening to what they want to hear," she says.

"People ask the question, 'Why aren't you more vocal about your views on nuclear power? You are the ones most affected by the disaster and have the right to speak the loudest.' They can't answer because their feelings are so much more complicated than we can imagine. **For them continuing to live in the area is their statement--it is their form of protest.**"

"Trapped with no way out" (Nuclear Watch)

March 5, 2015

Maintaining the Tragic Memories

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclearwatch/20150305.html>

Nearly 4 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, NHK surveyed residents of the 3 hardest-hit prefectures. Of the more than 700 respondents, nearly 80 percent felt that the public's focus on the disaster and the ensuing nuclear accident is fading. One resident has dedicated himself to passing his experiences on to others, in a bid to keep the memories alive.

61-year-old Kenichi Hasegawa, a dairy farmer from the village of Iitate, in Fukushima prefecture, visited Hokkaido last month to share his experiences.

The nuclear accident forced him to destroy all of his milk cows.

"I was standing there in my empty cowshed, wondering what I could do... how I could support my family," Hasegawa said.

Dairy farmers in Iitate were not allowed to ship their milk because of the nuclear fallout.

They had no choice but to get rid of their cows, into which they had poured so much work and love. One tragedy fed off another.

"Had it not been for the nuclear plant..." is how a message written on a wall begins.

The message was left by a colleague of Hasegawa's who committed suicide three months after the disaster.

It was then that Hasegawa decided to start his speaking campaign in Japan and abroad to let people know about the dire situation in Fukushima.

"I thought to myself, 'This is absolutely unacceptable. Period. I have to tell everybody about this.' That's how I got started," Hasegawa said.

Hasegawa is concerned that the public may be losing interest in the tragic events of four years ago. And in the fact that the disasters are still casting a big shadow over peoples' lives.

Entries in his datebook record the 250 speeches he has given. He gave 100 in the first year after the disaster.

But now he gives only half as many.

"It's gradually fading away. The memory is slowly disappearing from the minds of the Japanese people. That's what I feel very strongly," Hasegawa said.

With an evacuation order still in effect, access to the entire village remains restricted. Amid all the uncertainty, Hasegawa made the major decision this winter to tear down his cowshed.

The move was prompted by the decision of his frustrated eldest son, who is in his 30s, to leave the village to start a dairy farm somewhere else.

None of his family members can foresee a time when they can return home. Despite all the turmoil, Hasegawa headed off to give another speech, this time in Tokyo.

"What can we do in such a tainted village?" Hasegawa asked. "There are no young people. What would the elderly do even if they were to return? That's the reality we have to face squarely."

Hasegawa stressed that **the people of his hometown share a feeling of being trapped, with no way out.**

"I am relieved to know that there are still people in Tokyo who care about us," Hasegawa said. "I hope they will help spread my words. Keeping them interested in the disaster is critical now. That's the way I see it."

Kenzaburo Oe: Follow Germany's example

March 11, 2015

Nobel-winner Oe slams Abe, urges nation to follow Germany and quit nuclear power

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/11/national/nobel-winner-oe-slams-abe-urges-nation-to-follow-germany-and-quit-nuclear-power/#.VQAKUOHkeXs>

by Mari Yamaguchi

AP

Nobel-winning author Kenzaburo Oe said Tuesday that the nation's push to restart some nuclear reactors following the Fukushima disaster could lead to another crisis, and urged Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to follow Germany's example and phase out atomic energy.

Oe's remarks to reporters came a day after visiting German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she had decided to end her country's use of nuclear energy by 2022 because the Fukushima crisis convinced her of its risks.

Abe, at a joint news conference on Monday with Merkel, reiterated that Japan still needs nuclear power as a stable energy source and said it now has top-level safety standards based on lessons learned from the disaster.

Oe said he saw a stark contrast between the two leaders. "It was very symbolic," he said. **"Japanese politicians are not trying to change the situation but only keeping the status quo even after this massive nuclear accident, and even if we all know that yet another accident would simply wipe out Japan's future."**

Three reactor cores at the Fukushima plant melted following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, spreading radiation outside the compound and forcing more than 100,000 people to relocate. Massive amounts of contaminated water at the plant are hampering the decommissioning effort, which is expected to take decades. New leaks of highly radioactive water from the plant's drainage systems, including one that its operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. did not reveal for months, have renewed public distrust.

Oe, 80, said his life's final work is to strive for a nuclear-free world.

"We must not leave the problem of nuclear plants for the younger generation," he said.

The winner of the Nobel literature prize in 1994, Oe has campaigned for peace and anti-nuclear causes, particularly since the Fukushima disaster, and has often appeared in rallies.

Koizumi "dumbfounded" by Abe's nuclear policy

March 12, 2015

Koizumi blasts Abe's nuclear policy, remark about Fukushima crisis

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201503120038>

By SHINICHI SEKINE/ Staff Writer

KITAKATA, Fukushima Prefecture--Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said he was "dumbfounded" by his protege's push to restart nuclear reactors and his claim that the situation at the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant was "under control."

In his strongest tone so far, Koizumi repeated his anti-nuclear arguments at a lecture here on March 11, the fourth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that led to the meltdowns at the Fukushima power plant.

Persistent leaks and the accumulation of radioactive water at the nuclear plant have long hampered efforts to decommission the reactors there.

But in front of an international audience in September 2013, during the final presentation in Tokyo's bid to host the 2020 Olympics, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the water problem was "under control."

"It is not under control at all," Koizumi said of Abe's comment. "I cannot believe he could ever say something like that."

Koizumi also questioned the rationale behind the Abe government's plans to restart reactors whose operations were suspended after the 2011 disaster.

"The chairman of the Nuclear Regulation Authority has said that even if nuclear power plants meet the NRA's new regulation standards, that itself does not guarantee their safety," the former prime minister said.

He added that nuclear power is the "least cost-effective method of power generation."

Koizumi also criticized the government's plan to unilaterally select the location for the final repository of spent nuclear fuel, which has been piling up at nuclear plants around the nation.

"It is irresponsible for the government to make the decision and force other parties to obey it when the resumption of idled nuclear power plants is set to produce even more spent fuel," he said.

Koizumi said a political decision is needed to end the nation's dependence on nuclear energy.

"If the government shifts to a policy of having no nuclear power plants, then the nation can see economic growth through natural sources of energy," he said.

10 lessons from Fukushima

10 Lessons from Fukushima:

Reducing risks and protecting communities from nuclear disasters

<http://fukushimalessons.jp/en-booklet.html>

available online in 5 languages

(Japanese, English, Korean, Chinese <traditional> and French),

also distributed at the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan (not far from Fukushima)

and on some occasions in Fukushima too

Preserve slogans as "negative lunacy"



Yuji Onuma holds a sign saying, "Absolutely opposed to sign removal" in Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture. As a child, he wrote the slogan on the signboard that says, "Nuclear energy is the energy of a bright future." (Masakazu Honda)

Slogan writer wants pro-nuclear signboards kept to highlight human stupidity

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201503160045>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The creator of a slogan on signboards touting a "bright future" from nuclear energy opposes plans to remove them from a deserted town in Fukushima Prefecture, saying they bear an important new message. "The signboards should be preserved as a negative legacy and used to pass on to future generations the stupidity of human beings," said Yuji Onuma, 39.

Onuma came up with the phrase "Nuclear energy is the energy of a bright future" in 1988, when he was a sixth-grader at Futaba Kita elementary school. His submittal for a homework project received an award, and the slogan became a fixture on two signboards that hang across streets welcoming visitors at the center of the town of Futaba.

The signboards now are an ironic reminder of the devastating effects of the Fukushima nuclear accident. Part of the stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant lies within the town.

Futaba officials decided to remove the brittle signboards because they could fall and hit people or passing cars.

Onuma, however, informed the Futaba government and town assembly on March 16 of his opposition to the removal plan.

"I want to think about what to do after consulting with the town assembly," Futaba Mayor Shiro Izawa said.

Like all residents of Futaba, Onuma's life has been turned upside down because of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Onuma's wife was pregnant when the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered the nuclear accident in March 2011. The couple moved to various parts of Japan and finally settled in Koga, Ibaraki Prefecture, in May 2014.

During his four-plus years as an evacuee, Onuma reflected back on his elementary school slogan. "Rather than a bright future, nuclear energy has simply destroyed my hometown," he said.

He learned in March that the town government was planning to set aside 4.1 million yen (\$34,000) in the budget for the next fiscal year to remove the signboards.

"Even though there are many public facilities on the verge of collapsing all around the signboards, removing only the signboards would be an act of not facing up to the mistaken past," he said. "If there is that much money available, reinforcement work can be carried out. I want to pass on the truth to our children."

Onuma plans to begin a petition drive seeking the preservation of the signboards.

(This article was written by Masakazu Honda and Takuro Negishi.)

Fukushima man wants to preserve nuclear slogan

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Mar. 16, 2015 - Updated 09:57 UTC+1

A former resident of a town hosting the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant is calling on local authorities to preserve signboards with pro-nuclear messages. He says the signs are a reminder of the 2011 nuclear accident.

All the residents in Futaba Town in Fukushima Prefecture remain evacuated from their homes following the nuclear accident 4 years ago.

Municipal authorities earlier this month decided to remove 2 signboards in the town that promoted nuclear power, due to wear and tear.

39-year-old Yuji Onuma came up with one of the slogans when he was in sixth grade. The slogan calls nuclear power the energy of a promising future.

On Monday, Onuma visited the town's temporary office in Iwaki in the prefecture, and submitted a request to the town and assembly. He said the signboards should be mended and preserved as a lesson learnt from the accident for the future generations.

Town Mayor Shiro Izawa explained the deteriorating signboards need to be removed to keep them from falling on residents making short visits to their homes.

He said the signboards will not be taken apart. Assembly members will consider what to do with them.

Onuma said he mistakenly believed that the town's future would be bright, thanks to the nuclear power plant. He said if the signboards are removed, people may forget that the accident occurred.

March 16, 2015

Nagasaki Hibakushas outraged by Putin's remarks

March 19, 2015

Nagasaki A-bomb survivors protest Putin's nuclear arsenal remarks

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201503190045

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

NAGASAKI--Hibakusha organizations in Nagasaki Prefecture expressed outrage over Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent remarks about possibly having nuclear weapons at the ready.

The five atomic bomb survivor groups sent a written protest on March 18 to the Russian Embassy in Tokyo. They also called on the government to protest Putin's remarks in a TV documentary show aired on March 15 that alluded to Russia's readiness to have a nuclear arsenal on alert last year at the time of its annexation of Crimea.

"(In marking the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing this year), the remarks fundamentally trampled on the wishes of atomic bomb victims in Nagasaki Prefecture to renew their determination to eliminate nuclear weapons," the letter to Putin said.

It also condemned the Russian president, saying that putting a nuclear arsenal on alert was wrong.

The letter urged Putin to rescind his remarks, which the hibakusha groups said was tantamount to a nuclear threat.

In letters addressed to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, the groups vented their frustration over the government's inaction with regard to Moscow's behavior by saying, "We cannot help but doubt the government's stance toward nuclear weapons."

Satirical cartoons unwelcomed?

March 19, 2015

French satirical weekly publishes Fukushima cartoon

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150319p2g00m0dm050000c.html>

PARIS (Kyodo) -- French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo took up the issue of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station in a cartoon in its March 18 issue.

The cartoon -- on the theme of "spring" -- shows two people in protective gear against the backdrop of a smoke-spewing nuclear plant talking about the year's first swallow while looking at footprints of a huge bird, suggesting it has mutated into a monstrous size due to radiation.

In 2013, another French weekly, Le Canard enchaîné, carried cartoons satirizing the Fukushima crisis, drawing a protest from the Japanese government.

The weekly also carried two cartoons about nuclear power plants in France in the same issue.

In January this year, 11 people were killed in the Paris office of Charlie Hebdo when they were attacked by Islamic extremists following the publication of cartoons caricaturizing the Prophet Muhammad.

Source : Jiji Press

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2015031801006>

Charlie Hebdo Satirizes Fukushima Radiation Crisis

Paris, March 18 (Jiji Press)--French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo published in its latest edition Wednesday a cartoon poking fun at the nuclear disaster in Japan.

The cartoon features a pair of footprints of a bird that seems to have grown mammoth due to the effects of radiation, with two men in radiation protection suits saying the footprints are of "the first swallow" of the year against the background of columns of black smoke arising from what appears to be Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s <9501> Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

In France, an illustration making fun of the nuclear accident appeared in another weekly in 2013.

The Charlie Hebdo cartoon could provoke a backlash from Japan, observers said.

The French weekly's offices in Paris were attacked by terrorists earlier this year, due to its publication of cartoons of Islam prophet Muhammad.

Putin's remarks disrespectful to A-bomb victims

March 18, 2015

VOX POPULI: Putin's nuclear comment dishonors memory of Japan's A-bomb victims

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/vox/AJ201503180032>

Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a daily column that runs on Page 1 of The Asahi Shimbun.

Spring was in the air when I went to the National Archives of Japan in Tokyo the other day for an exhibition titled "JFK: His Life and Legacy." This interesting exhibition about U.S. President John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) includes a section on the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962--those 13 days when "humanity came to the brink of nuclear conflict."

The Cold War was raging, and international tensions heightened like never before when it was discovered that the Soviet Union had built a missile base in Cuba. Official memos from that time show that the White House considered the option of an armed attack on the base. But the crisis was averted at the last moment and the world was spared a nuclear war.

I had just returned from the exhibition when I heard the deeply shocking statement by Russian President Vladimir Putin on television to the effect that Russia was ready to bring its nuclear arsenal to a state of alert at the time of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

I imagine his comment was meant as a warning to the United States and Europe. But one would expect the threat of nuclear deployment to come from some sleazy outlaw, not from the leader of a superpower. Putin apparently feels he is expected to play the hardcore, tough guy. His macho words and deeds, as manifested in the forcible annexation of Crimea, have created the image of a "formidable Russia." His popularity remains strong in his country.

But this has also resulted in his isolation from the international community. The Americans and the Europeans are further tightening their guard.

Putin's remark cannot possibly be acceptable to anyone who has been calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons to avert a "third tragedy."

Let me quote this heartfelt poem by Tsutomu Yamaguchi (1916-2010), a survivor of both the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings: "May the black rain never fall again/ So that humans can keep praying for peace under the blue sky."

March 18 marks the first anniversary of the annexation of Crimea. It makes me feel as if the clock has been turned back to before World War II rather than the Cold War era.

The souls of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki cannot rest in peace.

--The Asahi Shimbun, March 18

* * *

Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a popular daily column that takes up a wide range of topics, including culture, arts and social trends and developments. Written by veteran Asahi Shimbun writers, the column provides useful perspectives on and insights into contemporary Japan and its culture.

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March 19, 2015

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"10 Lessons" booklet distributed to UN Conference

March 18, 2015

FOUR YEARS AFTER: NGOs introduce '10 Lessons from Fukushima' booklet at U.N. disaster conference

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201503180061>



The booklet "10 Lessons from Fukushima" and translated versions line an exhibition space in Sendai on March 16. (Shunsuke Kimura)

By SHUNSUKE KIMURA/ Staff Writer

SENDAI--A booklet focusing on the plight of residents of crisis-hit Fukushima Prefecture and advising communities on preparing for nuclear disasters was distributed here at a United Nations conference that concluded on March 18.

The 70-page "10 Lessons from Fukushima" was assembled by the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC), Peace Boat and other nongovernmental organizations to spread the message of challenges facing individuals affected by the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. Available in Japanese, English, Chinese and Korean, "10 Lessons from Fukushima" was introduced at the March 14-18 U.N. World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai.

"We must share the knowledge and experiences of Fukushima," Masaaki Ohashi, JANIC chairman, said at a news conference. "We want the residents of nations that will be building nuclear reactors to be familiar with the contents of this booklet."

A French version of the booklet is currently being developed, and translations in more languages are also in the pipeline.

Lessons in the booklet include during an emergency, the basic premise must be for people to flee areas threatened with imminent danger; people affected by disasters have the right to a comprehensive health examination and disclosure of information; to ensure the safety of local agricultural, fisheries and forest products, such goods must be carefully checked for contamination with the cooperation of residents; the

understanding made that complete decontamination is not possible; and the determination made how heavily taxpayers should bear compensation costs.

The lessons are driven home with descriptions of events that occurred as a result of the nuclear crisis caused by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

"At the time of the accident, most locals were likely unaware of terms such as 'sievert,' " Ohashi said.

The U.N conference was scheduled to be concluded on March 18 after adopting a new framework on disaster risk reduction for post-2015, updating the Hyogo Framework for Action ratified 10 years ago.

"10 Lessons from Fukushima" was distributed to participants of the conference at an exhibition space on disaster management and reconstruction efforts.

The booklet can be downloaded online at (<http://fukushimalessons.jp/en.html>).

Wishful thinking unacceptable

March 24, 2015

COMMENTARY: 'Wishful thinking' of nuclear insiders must not be allowed to be reborn

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/column/AJ201503240005>

By TOSHIHIDE UEDA/ Senior Staff Writer

FUKUSHIMA--Four years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered a triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011.

"Am I really living in a leading nation of the world?" I have been asking myself ever more often after I moved to this northeastern city, capital of the prefecture of the same name, in spring 2014.

At least 120,000 residents of Fukushima Prefecture still remain evacuated. Simply driving along National Route No. 6, which runs north to south across evacuation zones, or in its environs will let you see, whether you like it or not, many telltale objects such as dilapidated houses, a huge number of bags filled with refuse from the decontamination efforts, and debris left in the open.

A joint survey conducted recently by The Asahi Shimbun Co. and Fukushima Broadcasting Co. showed that 69 percent of Fukushima Prefecture residents believed that little or no foundation has been laid for post-disaster rebuilding. That finding is not surprising at all.

Just as disaster areas remain in such a plight, a subcommittee of the industry ministry began meeting on Jan. 30 to discuss what energy sources should be used, and to what extent, to cover Japan's electricity demand in the years to come.

"I believe Japan's (nuclear) safety regulation system has become a global standard," the minutes of the proceedings quote one former industry ministry official as saying during a subcommittee meeting. "I just hope the public will fully understand that safety standards that are at the world's top level are now in place."

Those remarks stupefied me.

In Japan, emergency evacuation plans have yet to be covered by the government's safety screenings, and anti-terrorist measures are also slow in being worked out. And Japan is one of the most earthquake-prone countries in the world.

Even if we had standards of the "world's top level," would that be enough? Well, the public remains unconvinced.

'LAUGHABLE' GOAL

The remarks probably only represented "wishful thinking" of the speaker, who hopes things will be like what he said.

It is the wishful thinking of stakeholders that is talked about in Japan's nuclear policy--I have had that impression more than a few times during the many years I have covered the nuclear issue.

Such a reliance on wishful thinking has reigned over Japan's nuclear power community since its cradle days.

Physicist Eizo Tajima (1913-1998), who was involved his entire life in Japan's nuclear power development, wrote an autobiography, "Aru Genshi Butsurigakusha no Shogai" (Life of a nuclear physicist), published by Shin Jinbutsu Oraisha.

Tajima engaged in research for developing atomic bombs at the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research, today's Riken research institute, during World War II. He served on the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, as one of the inaugural commissioners of the now-defunct Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan, and in other posts in postwar years.

While serving on the JAEC, Tajima proposed adding a safety expert to the lineup of its permanent commissioners. When his proposal was rejected, he resigned as commissioner to protest the government's attitude. He continued to take great pains, until the end of his life, to ensure nuclear safety and have the nuclear power administration reformed.

Tajima was named a JAEC commissioner in 1972. That year, the government revised its "long-term plan" for nuclear power development for the first time in five years. The No. 1 reactor of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant had only entered service the previous year, and only five nuclear reactors were up and running across Japan.

The new plan said there was "demand for nuclear power generation to account for" some 60 gigawatts in fiscal 1985 and some 100 gigawatts in fiscal 1990. Tajima wrote in his autobiography how he felt about that plan.

"I did not believe such a plan was by any means achievable, and I thought the JAEC ought to be responsible for that long-term plan, so I asked about the grounds for that plan during a JAEC meeting, whereupon I got this answer matter-of-factly, 'This is a nonbinding goal.' That dumbfounded me. I could not believe it, but it appeared that was common sense in Japan's government offices, so I thought it was perhaps laughable to take that seriously for feasible projections."

Japan currently has 48 nuclear reactors, with a combined power generating capacity of only 44.26 gigawatts. It was the government plan that was "laughable."

FORGOTTEN WARNING

The government warned itself against a reliance on wishful thinking at least once in the past, when it issued the 2000 White Paper on Nuclear Safety.

The making of that year's white paper followed the 1999 criticality accident at JCO Co.'s Tokai works in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, during which three workers of the nuclear fuel processing company were exposed to large radiation doses, with two of them dying. The reliance of nuclear power community insiders on a "safety myth," which assumed nuclear power was absolutely safe, came under heavy criticism.

“Why was an erroneous ‘safety myth’ formed?” the white paper asked, and cited “excessive confidence in track records,” “loss of memory of past accidents,” “wishes for absolute safety” and other reasons as potential factors.

But that warning was left to fade into oblivion.

“Technology goes wrong the moment you assert it is 100 percent safe,” Shunichi Tanaka, chairman of the Nuclear Regulation Authority, told a news conference on Feb. 18. “The moment you say so, you are abandoning efforts to enhance safety.”

That is something we learned fully from the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Prospects for ending the crisis at the disaster site or laying the foundation for post-disaster rebuilding are nowhere in sight. We should not allow the propensity of nuclear insiders to rely on wishful thinking to come back to life.

* * *

The author, based in Fukushima, wrote on other issues.

Fukushima no koe wo kiko!

March 09, 2015

FOUR YEARS AFTER: Raw voices from Fukushima's aftermath heard in Tokyo

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/recovery/AJ201503090059>

By LOUIS TEMPLADO/ AJW Staff Writer

Essayist Ichie Watanabe has heard dozens of life stories from people impacted by the Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear accident that followed, but she has done more than simply writing them down. Instead she has brought the narrators themselves to Tokyo, creating a forum where their raw voices can reach across the growing void between life in the disaster-stricken areas and how it is seen by outsiders. “For many people here in the city, the disaster is beginning to seem like something that happened long ago and far away,” says Watanabe, 70. “But for those in Fukushima and other stricken areas, it’s still going on every day, even as people pay less attention.”

She hosted the first “Fukushima no koe wo kiko!” (I’ll hear Fukushima’s voice) Tokyo talk session in March 2012. This month marked the 14th gathering.

Among those she has introduced in the past sessions is Shigeki Ota, a Tokyo native who moved to the Hippo district in Marumori, Miyagi Prefecture, in 1995 to run a farm with his family.

“The event gives us a chance to speak directly and give our view of what is happening, which is not always the same as what they learn from the news,” Ota says.

Watanabe, who at times works with her husband, the writer Makoto Shiina, first went to Fukushima in July 2011 as a volunteer, working with survivors mainly around the Minami-Soma area.

Because of her age, she says, elderly victims--especially women who found themselves living alone in temporary shelters--opened up more easily to her, and their stories resonated with experiences in her own life.

Born in Manchuria in 1945, Watanabe and her mother were repatriated at war's end to Japan, where the pair found it difficult to settle down in any one place. After she decided to become a writer, Watanabe spent nearly 20 years traveling to Tibet, depicting the lives of Tibetans struggling to maintain their identity while living under Chinese rule.

What she has seen in Fukushima, she says, is not very different from what she has seen in Tibet.

"In both places the people are being told that their lives are being improved, that progress has come and things are moving forward. To a certain extent that's true, but not everyone can walk at the same pace, and those who can't are being left behind," says Watanabe.

In Fukushima, she first set up an e-mail magazine so that residents scattered into temporary housing facilities could read her stories and learn about each others' struggles.

But she felt there was more in her encounters than she could put into words.

"With each article I wrote, I became more aware that I could only express the residents' experiences with words of my choice, and not really deliver what it is I felt directly from their presence," says Watanabe.

"Over the past couple of years, residents have begun to feel abandoned and forgotten, and increasingly have no way of delivering their feelings to the outside world. There are some people whom the media have focused on, but many of the speakers who come here come because they have no other forum."

Among those invited to those sessions are elderly women who to this day live in temporary shelters, increasingly isolated as other residents move out; evacuees who have had to leave their homes but started new lives nearby; and farmers determined to stay where they are.

Ota, 43, has spoken at Fukushima no koe wo kiko! twice.

"When I contacted a pediatrician I knew in Tokyo to ask about how he was reacting to the news 'concerning the effects of the nuclear power plant accident on agricultural products,' I expected to hear him say that there was no need to worry," Ota told the audience when he first spoke at the event.

"Instead I learned that he was trying to get his food elsewhere and to not touch our products. On one level I could understand their desire for safety, but at the same time, I was saddened by the call to refuse food from our region."

Looking back on his appearance in Tokyo, Ota adds that mixed feelings remain unresolved even today.

"There are many people in Tokyo who can't understand why we stay where we are. Many say we should leave," says Ota, whose farm is located about 50 kilometers from the reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant damaged during the quake and tsunami. He makes miso, which is sold at the event, and is working to turn a disused school in his locale into a senior care facility for his community.

"I want to tell people that we accept the dangers and contradictions of our situation, and also need to feel hope and look forward with our everyday lives. Many people still don't realize that they are responsible for what has happened, and the talk is a chance to remind them."

Often there's a dissonance between what the survivors say and what those far away want to hear, says Watanabe.

"In Tokyo, people believe that they are thinking about the people affected by the disaster when they are actually listening to what they want to hear," she says.

"People ask the question, 'Why aren't you more vocal about your views on nuclear power? You are the ones most affected by the disaster and have the right to speak the loudest.' They can't answer because their feelings are so much more complicated than we can imagine. For them continuing to live in the area is their statement--it is their form of protest."

Yes to a nuclear-free world! Yes to Peace!

http://org.salsalabs.com/o/161/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=17496

Sign the Peace and Planet Nuclear Weapons Abolition Petition!

This April, most of the world's governments meet at the United Nations for the month-long Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Peace Action is part of an international movement to abolish nuclear weapons and here's an opportunity to join with people all over the world calling for zero nuclear weapons!

In a demonstration of our determination to build a fair, democratic, ecologically sustainable, and peaceful future, people will gather in New York City and around the world for international days of action April 24 – 26, 2015, just before the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference at the United Nations.

We call upon the parties to the NPT to use the 2015 Review Conference to immediately, without delay, develop a timetable to ban and eliminate all nuclear weapons.

We call upon the four states outside the Treaty that have nuclear arms, India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan, to join this process, immediately and without delay.

We are at a crucial juncture, a time when the unresolved tensions of a deeply inequitable society, great power ambitions, and the destructive effects of an unsustainable economic system are exploding into overlapping crises.

Yes to a Nuclear-Free World!

Yes to Nonviolence!

Yes to Economic Justice and Environmental Sustainability!

Yes to Peace!!

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Yes to Economic Justice and Environmental Sustainability!

Yes to Peace!!

Thousands protest over nuclear policies

March 23, 2015

Thousands protest outside Diet building over shift in security policy

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201503230035

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Thousands of protesters rallied March 22 outside the Diet building in Tokyo **to oppose the Abe administration's policies on security and nuclear issues.**

The gathering organized by citizens groups such as the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a coalition of groups that stage demonstrations in the Tokyo area, drew an estimated 14,000 people.

They chanted "Do not create a country which wages wars," and other slogans.

The event came on the heels of a March 20 agreement by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and Komeito, its junior coalition partner, on the direction in which new national security legislation will be written.

Based on the agreement, the scope of Self-Defense Forces' missions abroad will be expanded.

Prior to the rally, students and other participants gathered at an open-air concert venue in Hibiya Park in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward to express their opposition to Japan exercising the right to collective self-defense and restarts of idled nuclear power plants. They then marched to the Diet building.

Kenichi Suzuki, a part-time worker from Hiratsuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, was among the participants.

"The Abe administration turns a deaf ear to the voices of the Japanese people," the 65-year-old said. "We want to realize politics that respect the principles of democracy."

Shigeaki Koga speaks out

Japan's Lonely Brave Bureaucrat speaks out on TV Asahi

http://nf2045.blogspot.fr/2015/03/japans-lonely-brave-bureaucrat-speaks.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+NuclearFreeBy2045+%28Nuclear+Free+by+2045?%29

Posted: 28 Mar 2015 12:09 AM PDT

A former high level bureaucrat in the Japanese Ministry of Trade was one of the few public officials to bravely speak up for radical change in the wake of the earthquake-tsunami-meltdown catastrophe. *The Economist* was one of the first in the English language media to report on Shigeaki Koga's radical proposals for reform of national energy policy. In September 2011, *The Economist* reported his views:

"I believe this is the final chance for Japan to change," Mr. Koga said in May, when I asked him during a wide-ranging interview why he was speaking out. "If I shut my mouth and obtain a good post in the ministry—even if I did that, in a few years Japan's economy would plunge," he said. "That is why I am taking on risks, and I don't care if I have to resign. Because if I don't speak out, Japan will not change. It is meaningless for me to be in the government if I cannot advocate reform."

Since this time he has been shut out of meaningful participation in reform, but he has been a regular guest commentator on news programs. He has been a regular on TV Asahi's evening news program *Hodo Station*, but things took a bad turn in January, when, taking inspiration from the "Je suis Charlie" frenzy, he held up a placard during the broadcast stating "I'm not Abe."

At a press conference afterwards at the Tokyo Foreign Correspondents Club, Mr. Koga explained the way he was being excluded from further appearances on *Hodo Station*:

(Reporter) Mr. Koga, just to follow up on this because your case may be very important for the future of Japan. Could you tell us if you are officially and publicly being "sacked" from your job?

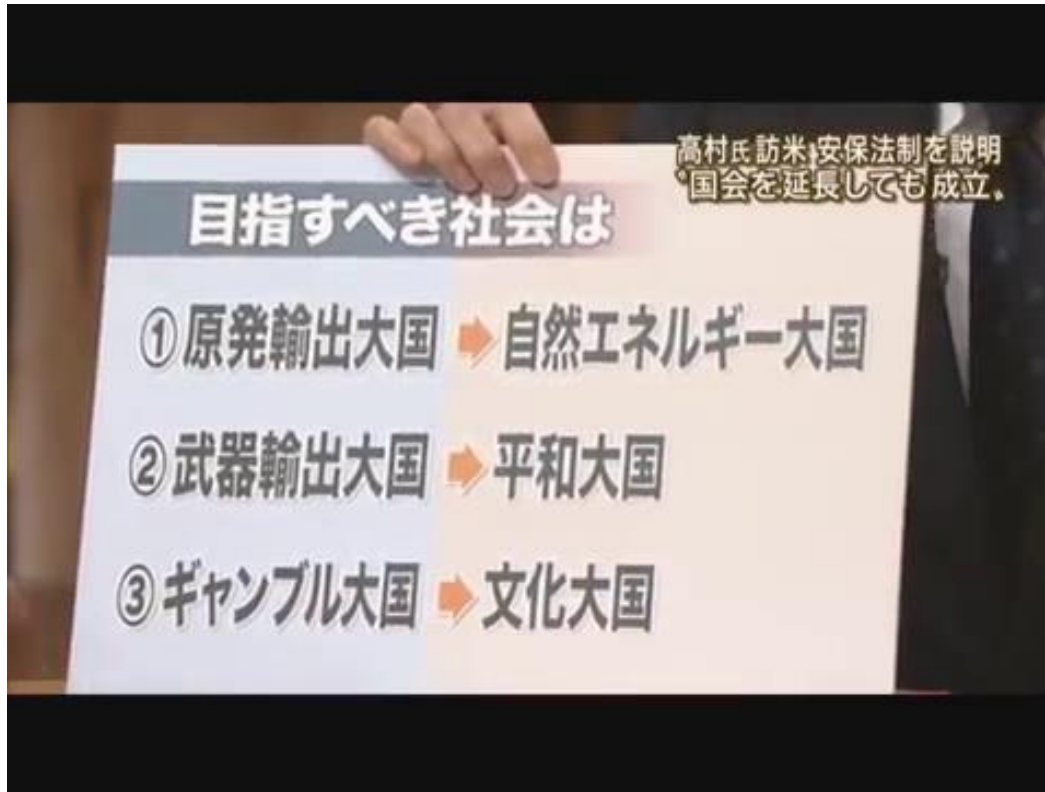
If I make any mistake in explaining this, it will bring about many problems. Even if I am scolded, I will be scolded only by TV Asahi. So it is not as scary as being scolded by [Chief Cabinet Secretary] Suga. Precisely speaking, there is no contract that guarantees exactly how many times per year that I will appear on *Hodo Station*. From TV Asahi's perspective, they ask me to appear on a case-by-case basis. So, it is not that they are firing me. As far as I have heard, it is the producer who has the leading role in deciding which commentator appears on the show. As for me, I have been very busy, so the producer and I used to set a schedule for next three-month period. Basically, the producer asked me to appear about once a month, and as for the exact date of appearance, we agreed to decide two or three months ahead.

I heard that the head of the press bureau of TV Asahi had not been comfortable with my appearances since last year. But, after January 23, he ordered a strict prohibition on my appearances after April 2015.

I have not heard this from the head in person, so I would like to hear this from him in person. This is how I understand the case. My appearance on March 6th and 27th were already scheduled. If they had canceled scheduled appearances, there would have been criticism. But since no appearances by me were scheduled after April, I think that is the reason why they decided to enact the prohibition in April. A reporter at yesterday's press conference by the president of TV Asahi told me that nothing has been decided yet about my future appearances. Moreover, the president maintained that he is not aware of any pressure coming from the *Kantei* [Prime Minister's office]. (as reported by Japanese Perspective)

On March 27, 2015, Mr. Koga made what he said on air would be his last appearance on the show (now on Youtube). He had a rather tense exchange with the host, but managed to say some of the things he wanted to say. He countered the common wisdom that Prime Minister Abe is not accomplishing anything, and explained sarcastically that in fact he was pushing through his vision of a "beautiful Japan." He then held up a placard that listed the three major goals the Abe administration has been working toward: nuclear technology exports, weapons exports, and gambling (or *recklessness* might be a better translation). Mr. Koga then gave his own advice that these three arrows of reform should be replaced by exports of renewable energy technology, peace and culture. Then he again held up the "I am not Abe" sign, explaining politely to his host that this time he did not trouble the Asahi staff to make the sign. This one he made for himself. He finished by holding up a placard with a quotation by Gandhi as he advised Japanese people to not be afraid to express their views:

Nearly everything you do is of no importance, but it is important that you do it. Changing yourself may not change the world, but for the world to stay as it is, it depends on you not changing.



Mr. Koga's proposals for changing national policy

goals to renewable energy, peace and culture.

Shigeaki Koga may be banished from certain media outlets for the time being, but I have a feeling we haven't heard the last of him.

Sources:

"The Good Bureaucrat." *The Economist*. September 14, 2011.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2011/09/japans-shame>

Japan's shame

The good bureaucrat

Sep 14th 2011, 4:51 by K.N.C. | TOKYO

THERE are many heroes in post 3/11 Japan. The mayor of Rikuzentakata, who ensured the safety of city residents only for his wife to perish, is one, as are the Tokyo firefighters who streamed up to Fukushima to spray water on the out-of-control reactors. But among those who deserve honour is also a humble bureaucrat at the trade ministry. In a system that prizes remaining nameless, faceless and not rocking the boat, Shigeaki Koga chose to step forward and reveal some of Japan's ugliest secrets.

After 3/11, Mr Koga decided speak out about the awful practices he had experienced while working on Japan's energy policy. The disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant, run by TEPCO, is symptomatic of a wider malaise. The utility companies buy the academy by sponsoring research, buy the media through mountains of public-service advertisements and junkets, buy big business by paying top-dollar for everything, buy the bureaucrats and regulators by handing them cushy post-retirement jobs.

Talking to him one gets a chill down the spine. Often, bureaucrats are regarded as lemming-like self-interested do-nothings or devious micro-managers. But Mr Koga's brave words and deep understanding of how energy companies pad their costs, block competition, keep energy prices high and ultimately strangle Japan is an antidote to that image. Instead, the figure that emerges is a deeply intelligent, hard-working civil servant who wants the best for his country.

Advertisement

In the spring he devised his own restructuring plan for TEPCO that was utterly ignored by the ministry (which has long been in the pocket of the energy companies), though it won him plaudits from a handful of reformist politicians. He advocates opening the energy monopoly to competition and separating the power generation and transmission operations of today's ten regional monopolies.

If only his country would listen. His private views to colleagues landed him in the wilderness. Superiors told him to resign. Yet since going public with his revelations and criticisms, he has been placed into an even darker solitary confinement. His current assignment is, well, nothing. When he asked the previous trade minister, Banri Kaieda, for a meaningful post, Mr Kaieda was noncommittal. (When *The Economist* asked Mr Kaieda about Mr Koga's views, the then-trade minister dismissed it as something for "the long term". Translation: "Never".)

"I believe this is the final chance for Japan to change," Mr Koga said in May, when I asked him during a wide-ranging interview why he was speaking out. "If I shut my mouth and obtain a good post in the ministry—even if I did that, in a few years Japan's economy would plunge," he said. "That is why I am taking on risks, and I don't care if I have to resign. Because if I don't speak out, Japan will not change. It is meaningless for me to be in the government if I cannot advocate reform."

On September 14th, Mr Koga was poised to send an e-mail to his latest boss, the trade minister Yoshihiko Edano, asking for a real post. If he fails to get one, he says he will retire later this month. It will be a true pity if Japan loses one of the few men who could actually improve the country considerably. It will be a shame; a self-inflicted wound.

If Mr Edano has any sense—and courage—he will promote Mr Koga to vice-minister (the highest civil-servant position in the ministry) with a remit to see through his wise reforms. Japan needs its leaders just as it needs its heroes. The country's haplessness is precisely because people like Mr Koga, who strive for what is right despite the personal consequences, are banished rather than elevated.

“Shigeaki Koga Criticizes Abe Administration’s Pressure on the Media,”

Japanese Perspective, February 27, 2015

<http://japaneseperspective.com/shigeaki-koga-holds-press-conference-at-foreign-correspondents-club/>

What about a nuclear-free Japan?

April 5, 2015

INSIGHT: Why not talk more about a nuclear-free future for Japan?

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/column/AJ201504050005>

By NAOHITO MAEDA/ Senior Staff Writer

While German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is moving to pull the plug on nuclear power in her nation, was visiting Japan on March 9, I met with a former Lower House member.

“In my view, Japan does have energy politics but has no energy policy,” Satoshi Shima, 56, emphatically told me.

Shima currently serves as an adviser to Softbank Corp., a telecommunications company led by Chairman and CEO Masayoshi Son, a high-profile entrepreneur. Having served eight years as head of the CEO’s office at the company, Shima, a stalwart champion of a nuclear phase-out, has been working behind the scenes to link policy with politics with regard to renewable energy sources.

In Shima’s opinion, “politics” is about making arrangements as to who will gain profits, whereas “policy” is about deciding the best choice from an overall perspective.

“Germany has chosen to go nuclear-free after properly studying energy policy,” he said. “But Japan, as it stands now, has nothing more than a sum of stakeholders’ lobbyism. Nuclear opponents are no match for pro-nuclear lobbies, which are so influential.”

The Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011 prompted Shima and Son to call for pulling the plug on nuclear energy and using more renewable energy sources.

Shima backed Morihiro Hosokawa and Junichiro Koizumi, an alliance of former prime ministers, who campaigned under the banner of “zero nuclear power” during the February 2014 gubernatorial election in Tokyo. But Hosokawa failed to win the governor’s seat, and nuclear opponents have barely made any headway since. They have now come to a grinding halt.

Japan is headed, without serious debate, toward a continued reliance on nuclear power. It is a foregone conclusion for the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that the country's nuclear reactors, all of which are idled now, will eventually be restarted. No in-depth debate is being made in the Diet over what to do with nuclear power.

The adversity notwithstanding, Shima is still pinning his hopes on elections. He showed me a paper that outlined a policy timeline related to renewable energy sources, and pointed to an entry that said 2016. "This is the year when the electricity retail market will be fully liberalized," he said. "And there will be an Upper House election in the summer of that year. To begin with, we need a political force that will fight those who will move to obstruct new entries into the market at that stage."

The crucial moment, in Shima's view, will be the process of "unbundling," scheduled for 2020, whereby the power transmission and distribution operations within major utilities will be spun off from their power generation operations and will be turned into separate entities. That policy process is believed to hold the key to spreading the use of renewable energy sources.

"That process could be emasculated if we go on like this," Shima said. "To prevent that from happening, we need to develop politicians who will put up a fight during the Upper House election in the summer of next year. Upper House members have a term of six years, so they can afford to work in a longer perspective. They are not quite like Lower House members, who are intimidated into silence under the overwhelming power of lobbyists."

The Democratic Party of Japan, which Shima belonged to as a Diet member, has set the goal of pulling the plug on nuclear power by the end of the 2030s. But the party is hard-pressed to come up with a clear-cut stance on whether nuclear reactors should be restarted, split as it is between the pros and cons of such a measure. In fact, the DPJ once made a decision to temporarily restart nuclear reactors when the party was at the helm of the government.

When Akira Nagatsuma, then acting DPJ president, ran unsuccessfully for the party's presidency in January, he was the most cautious of all candidates about restarting nuclear reactors. He was visibly exasperated by the current situation, wherein calls for a nuclear phase-out are gaining little traction.

"There are three conceivable crises that can put a state's survival at stake: war, nuclear disaster and financial collapse," Nagatsuma said. "Why not eliminate nuclear disaster, which is the easiest risk to eliminate? The Diet is full of what I cannot figure out, but this one is among the hardest to comprehend."

It would be too early to forget the nightmare of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, which has yet to be brought under control. I believe that from the perspectives of both policy and politics, we need to talk a lot more about a phase-out of nuclear power and about Japan's future.

Fukui Court rejects restart

April 14, 2015

Court rejects restart of Takahama nuclear reactors

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150414p2g00m0dm057000c.html>

FUKUI, Japan (Kyodo) -- A court issued an injunction on Tuesday ordering Kansai Electric Power Co. not to restart two reactors at its Takahama nuclear power plant on the Sea of Japan coast that have cleared safety screening by the nation's nuclear safety regulator.

The Fukui District Court's decision -- the first such injunction in Japan forbidding nuclear reactors from resuming operations -- concerns the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at the four-unit complex in Fukui Prefecture, located in an area along Wakasa Bay dotted with several nuclear power plants.

The court said it cannot see credible evidence in the utility's assumptions regarding earthquake risk.

The injunction is effective immediately. The utility serving Osaka and its surrounding region is expected to appeal the decision, but will not be able to restart the reactors unless its arguments are accepted.

The court decision is likely to affect not only the utility's resumption plans but also the government's energy policy, which places nuclear power as a key electricity source despite the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

Kansai Electric hoped to restart the two reactors in November after they cleared a Nuclear Regulation Authority screening in February based on what the Japanese government calls "the world's toughest safety standards" introduced after the 2011 Fukushima meltdowns.

Presiding Judge Hideaki Higuchi at the district court also presided over a May 2014 ruling by the same court that ordered the regional utility not to restart two reactors at another nuclear power plant in the same prefecture.

In the latest case filed by residents in Fukui and elsewhere in December, they claimed that an unexpected earthquake could cause a severe nuclear accident and spread radioactive materials. Kansai Electric argued that the company has taken sufficient safety measures.

All of Japan's 48 commercial reactors had gone offline by the end of September 2013 and remain inactive as none has yet completed all procedures required for a restart. Amid persistent safety concerns, the majority of Japanese remain opposed to restarting nuclear reactors.

Power companies are desperate to restart their nuclear plants amid an increase in imported fuel costs for thermal power generation in the absence of nuclear power. Kansai Electric relied heavily on nuclear power for its power generation before the Fukushima crisis triggered by a huge earthquake and tsunami. Only two other nuclear reactors, owned by Kyushu Electric Power Co., have obtained the regulator's safety clearance so far.

Fukui court forbids Takahama nuclear plant restart

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/14/national/crime-legal/critical-case-fukui-court-rule-takahama-nuclear-plant-restart/#.VS187ZPwLLM>

by Eric Johnston

Staff Writer

Plans to bring Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama No. 3 and 4 nuclear reactors back online were dealt a severe setback Tuesday when the Fukui District Court approved an injunction against restarting them, citing safety concerns.

It marks the first time in Japan's nearly half-century of commercial atomic power operations that a court has ordered an injunction against firing up reactors.

The decision comes despite the Nuclear Regulation Authority appraising the reactors against technical and safety criteria and clearing them for restart last November.

The injunction, which took effect immediately, is expected to push back Kepco's schedule — it originally envisaged restarting the reactors this November — but the longer term impact is unclear.

For Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, resuming nuclear power is key to domestic revitalization, particularly the success of his "Abenomics" policy mix.

In its ruling, the court challenged Kepco's assertion that the reactors were safe. Presiding Judge Hideaki Higuchi, who in a regular lawsuit last year ruled that the Oi No. 3 and 4 units not be restarted, said Kepco had not shown evidence its earthquake simulation data, which were used to conduct the safety evaluation, could be relied upon.

"This ruling is a giant step for efforts to abolish nuclear power, and, in practice, stops the restart of the reactors," said lawyers representing nine people seeking the injunction.

"I was not that surprised, as we had indications that the court would rule in our favor," said Atsuko Nishimura, one of the nine.

Part of the reason for the lack of complete surprise was that Nishimura and those seeking the injunctions felt that Higuchi, at least, might be on their side. So did Kepco, which undertook legal efforts to remove him. Those attempts failed last week when a high court rejected an appeal to overturn a lower court's dismissal of a move to unseat them.

In a statement, Kepco expressed regret over the decision but said it remained determined to restart the Takahama reactors.

"We're preparing to file the necessary papers to get the injunction lifted at the earliest possible date and will make efforts to stress the safety of the reactors," the utility said.

Pro-nuclear Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa, who was elected to a fourth term on Sunday, had no comment on the ruling and only addressed the safety issue in a written statement.

"The government is pursuing the restart of those reactors whose safety has been confirmed by the NRA. Fukui will respond to the ruling by sufficiently confirming the central government's and Kepco's response, and by making safety the top priority," Nishikawa said.

Kyoto-based anti-nuclear activist Aileen Mioko Smith said the ruling would likely have a huge political impact on restart plans elsewhere. But she added that she hoped the injunction will also influence nuclear safety policy at the NRA.

"The (injunction) ruling is a preventative measure. Seismologists have warned this area could see another big earthquake. To have an injunction will, hopefully, prevent another nuclear disaster like Fukushima, or worse," she said.

Fukui court blocks reactor restart

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150414_37.html

Apr. 14, 2015 - Updated 09:13 UTC+2

A court in Fukui Prefecture, central Japan, has issued a provisional injunction blocking the restart of 2 reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant.

A group of 9 citizens had filed for the injunction to keep the plant's No.3 and 4 reactors offline, citing safety problems.

Officials of the plant's operator, Kansai Electric Power Company, said they had taken thorough anti-quake measures based on lessons learned from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in 2011.

At the Fukui District Court on Tuesday, presiding judge Hideaki Higuchi said Kansai Electric is too optimistic in assuming that no major earthquake would hit Takahama, as 5 unexpectedly large quakes have hit nuclear plants across Japan in less than a decade.

The judge also said the Nuclear Regulation Authority's new requirements should be as tough as possible to eliminate any risk of disaster, but are too lax to ensure the safety of nuclear reactors.

Tuesday's injunction takes effect immediately, so Kansai Electric will not be able to restart the reactors unless the court decision is overturned.

Lawyers for the utility said they will consider lodging an objection.

Ruling on Takahama reactors' restart

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150414_12.html

Apr. 14, 2015 - Updated 03:17 UTC+2

People in Fukui Prefecture in central Japan are awaiting a court decision on whether a local nuclear plant should be allowed to go back online.

The Fukui District Court is set to deliver its decision on Tuesday on the Takahama nuclear power plant. A group of 9 citizens has filed for a provisional injunction to block the restart of the plant's No.3 and No.4 reactors.

The citizens say plant operator Kansai Electric is underestimating the maximum strength of an earthquake that could hit Takahama. They also claim there are safety problems with equipment, and warn of the risk of a serious accident.

Kansai Electric officials say they have taken thorough anti-quake measures based on the lessons learned from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in 2011. They deny that the plant's equipment is unsafe.

In February, the Nuclear Regulation Authority found the 2 Takahama reactors in compliance with new requirements introduced after the Fukushima accident.

With procedures for a restart already underway, the Fukui District Court has judged that it needs to promptly deliver its decision. If it issues an injunction, the measure could take effect immediately.

Meaning of Fukui Court's injunction

April 14, 2015

Effects of injunction on restarting reactors

Apr. 14, 2015 - Updated 12:11 UTC+2

The Takahama nuclear power plant cannot restart operations unless the injunction is overturned. Kansai Electric Power Company says it intends to lodge an objection with the court as soon as possible.

The utility says it will in the meantime continue with screenings and inspections by Japan's nuclear regulator. It will also seek the consent of Fukui Prefecture.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority says the injunction will not affect administrative procedures such as screenings and inspections.

Work toward restarting operations will continue as planned, and attention will be on whether the court's decision can be overturned by the time the reactors are ready.

Observers say the court's decision could affect future debate on nuclear safety in Japan.

Earlier, the Nuclear Regulation Authority announced that it had found the 2 reactors at the Takahama plant in compliance with new government requirements introduced after the 2011 Fukushima accident.

The observers say the court's decision is likely to cast doubt on not only restarting the reactors but on the regulator's current requirements as well.

Various ways to look at things (4)

April 16, 2015

Takahama nuclear restart injunction polarizing

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/16/national/takahama-nuclear-restart-injunction-polarizing/#.VS_q0ZPwlLM

by Eric Johnston
Staff Writer

A provisional injunction handed down Tuesday by the Fukui District Court against the restarting of Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama No. 3 and 4 reactors is a boost to opponents of nuclear power, even as the

decision draws criticism from senior politicians, nuclear regulators, Kepco, and pro-nuclear Japanese media.

A panel of three judges led by Hideaki Higuchi handed down a provisional injunction banning the restart of the two Takahama reactors, saying that the earthquake-risk prediction method used by the Nuclear Regulation Authority in approving the reactors' restart was flawed.

"It is hard to find, for a nuclear power station that must be prepared for a remotely possible accident, the rationale for establishing a basic earthquake ground motion that is based upon the foundation of the image of a mean earthquake," the ruling said.

"This signifies that basic earthquake ground motion has lost its reliability (as an assessment method) not only based upon the track record but also, logic."

The text was welcomed widely by the anti-nuclear camp.

"The great thing about the Fukui court's ruling is that it's written in relatively easy-to-understand Japanese. The NRA and Kepco are saying they don't understand the ruling, but the fact that they don't understand is strange," said Yuji Kano, a lawyer who supported those seeking the provisional injunction. The question now is whether the decision will influence efforts to block the restart of reactors elsewhere. Whether it becomes an important precedent rests on two factors, one political and one legal.

While not legally required, precedent demands that the utilities seek the "understanding" of local governments hosting the reactors before any restart. Fukui's local governments are pro-nuclear and anxious to have the reactors restart for economic reasons, but some other localities greeted the news about the provisional injunction with more caution.

In Hokkaido, where Hokkaido Electric is seeking the restart the Tomari nuclear plant, Gov. Harumi Takahashi, who was re-elected on April 12 and has indicated she favored a restart, said Wednesday that she was now unsure if the Fukui decision would effect Tomari.

Those involved in seeking the provisional injunction of the Takahama reactors said Friday that they hoped the decision would spur local governments to think more seriously about evaluating the safety of nuclear plants in their midst rather than just waiting for experts in Tokyo to tell them what to do.

"Here in Kansai, the (seven prefecture, four city) Union of Kansai Governments has said that as far as the safety of nuclear reactors is concerned, not only specialists from the central government but also local safety specialists appointed by local governments should be relied upon to evaluate a broad range of issues like local evacuation plans and to talk about problems related to the overall safety issues affecting the restart of reactors," said Hidenori Takahashi, one of those involved in seeking the court injunction.

But the legal issue starts with how other courts hearing appeals for provisional injunctions might rule.

Tadashi Matsuda, also one of the nine plaintiffs, said he worries the Fukui court ruling could be the exception rather than the precedent.

"The Fukui court judge's ruling was based on the people's right to human dignity. But the government and probably most Japanese are living lives based on economic values, and making judgments based on economics," he said.

"Even if we don't want judges elsewhere to rule on reactor restarts based on economic values, there's a possibility the results will be influenced by a priority on economics," Matsuda said.

No nukes: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima

April 17, 2015

Celebrities send 'no more Fukushima's' message in book to commemorate A-bombings

April 17, 2015

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201504170079

By HIDEKI SOEJIMA/ Staff Writer

A nuclear-free world is the theme of a book that expresses the thoughts of Japanese celebrities and others that will be released to commemorate the 70th anniversaries of the 1945 atomic bombings.

The 128-page book, titled "No Nukes: Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima," contains messages from 52 people, including such renowned artists as musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, actor Ken Watanabe and actress Sayuri Yoshinaga.

It is being published by Kodansha Ltd. and will go on sale April 20.

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Toshihide Maskawa and writer Kiyoshi Shigematsu also present their thoughts along with messages from survivors of the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which occurred on Aug. 6 and Aug. 9, 1945, respectively.

In the book, Sakamoto, who became actively involved in the anti-nuclear movement following the March 2011 crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, writes, "Declaring to the entire world that mankind cannot coexist with nuclear arms and power should be Japan's responsibility and way of contributing to global society as the only nation that has suffered from nuclear damage three times."

Watanabe writes, "Now that we have tasted the fear generated by nuclear power, a substance that cannot be fully controlled by humans, I feel that we will be unable to give our children a future if we do not make a drastic shift to renewable energy sources."

For her part, Yoshinaga said, "I wish for the Japanese to always have an allergy-like resistance toward nuclear weapons and energy."

Ichiro Ozawa, 57, an employee at Kodansha, who was in charge of the book's publication, was inspired to join the anti-nuclear movement in the summer 2013 after hearing Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue read that year's Nagasaki Peace Declaration.

The mayor stated, "I call on the Japanese government to consider once again that Japan is the only country to have suffered from a nuclear bombing."

Ozawa joined the Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons that autumn where he conceived the idea for the collaborative effort.

Ozawa asked Yuji Shimamoto, the editor behind Shogakukan Inc.'s "Nihonkoku Kenpo" (Constitution of Japan), a bestseller that sold almost a million copies, to collaborate on the project. They were joined by seven students from Hiroshima University, Nagasaki University and Fukushima University.

"We are hoping that the message of 'no nukes' one day becomes a standalone phrase as common as the term 'barrier-free,' " Ozawa said.

The mystery of the radioactive drone

April 22, 2015

UPDATE: Radiation detected on drone found on roof of prime minister's office

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201504220015

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A small, camera-equipped drone discovered on the roof of the prime minister's office building in Tokyo on April 22 produced a low level of radiation, police said.

Officials of the Metropolitan Police Department noted that the pilotless craft displays a hazard symbol for radiation.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is currently visiting Indonesia.

The craft measures 50 centimeters in diameter and has four bladed propellers. It is also fitted with a plastic container that is 3 cm in diameter and 10 cm high. There was no word on its possible contents.

A staff member in the prime minister's office found the drone around 10:25 a.m. and reported the matter to police about 15 minutes later.

The worker was checking facilities on the roof. An inspection had not been done for some time. It could not be determined when the drone fell or landed on the roof.

Police are trying to ascertain the drone's ownership and determine why it had been flying.

Police have been on alert because of online postings earlier this year that hinted at plans to launch drones over the Imperial Palace grounds.

According to the transport ministry, a small unmanned drone is not considered an aircraft under the Aviation Law. There are no restrictions on such craft flying over the prime minister's office at an altitude under 250 meters.

The ministry has been discussing whether to regulate drone flights while considering their commercial applications.

In January, a drone crashed on the grounds of the White House in Washington.

50-cm drone with camera found on roof of prime minister's office

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150422p2g00m0dm066000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A four-propeller drone about 50 centimeters long equipped with a miniature camera has been found on the roof of the prime minister's office in Tokyo, police said Wednesday.

The drone, which was also carrying a flare and a 10-centimeter plastic bottle, apparently fell onto the roof from the sky, the Metropolitan Police Department said. A staff member of the prime minister's office found the drone around 10:30 a.m.

An investigative source said a low level of radiation was detected from the drone, which bore a radioactivity symbol.

"We don't think it poses any danger," a government source said. When asked about the possibility that it was an attempted terrorist act, the source said "We don't know."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is currently in Indonesia for the Asian-African conference where he delivered a speech on Japan's contributions to global peace.

The prime minister's office is located in the central Tokyo and near government ministries and the National Diet Building.

In January, a drone crash at the U.S. White House spurred security concerns.

Japan has no rules regarding low-flying drones and no official licenses are required to fly them. There are around 20,000 drones in the country, according to the Japan UAS Industrial Development Association. Under the aviation law, people do not need to report to authorities unless they fly drones at an altitude of 150 meters or higher under flight routes used by regular aircraft, and 250 meters or higher in other areas, the transport ministry said.

April 22, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Drone with radiation symbol found on roof of prime minister's office

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/22/national/drone-found-roof-prime-ministers-office/#.VTCE5Pwmos>

by Reiji Yoshida

Staff Writer

A drone about 50 cm wide equipped with what appeared to be a small camera, a smoke flare and emblazoned with a radiation symbol was found on the roof of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Tokyo office on Wednesday morning, officials and media reports said.

Investigators said they also detected trace amounts of radiation from the device.

The drone was discovered at 10:27 a.m. by a worker at the office in the Nagatacho district of Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward, Abe's office said in a statement.

Officials immediately reported the discovery to police, who launched an investigation into the incident, the statement said without elaborating further.

Aerial footage taken by broadcaster NHK on Wednesday showed what appeared to be the drone sitting on top of the five-story building, with investigators milling around the device.

The drone appeared to be equipped with a camera, smoke pot and plastic bottle, NHK reported.

Abe is currently in Indonesia to attend commemorations marking the 60th anniversary of the Asian-African Conference.

The discovery has highlighted an apparent lack of regulations covering drone flights, though various models of the product are now widely available in shops in Japan.

According to the transport ministry, the aviation law requires a drone operator to inform the aviation authority if they plan a flight at an altitude of 250 meters or higher.

However, flights at other altitudes are not covered by the law, except for areas over and near an airport and within the flight routes of other aircraft, ministry officials said.

In January, a quadcopter drone was found inside the White House compound in the United States, making headlines around the world.

Kagoshima residents not ready to give up



Residents not giving up despite court setback over reactor restarts

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150422p2a00m0na020000c.html>

Hearing that the Kagoshima District Court dismissed local residents' demands for an injunction to stop reactivation of two reactors at the Sendai nuclear plant, people gather near the courthouse with posters protesting the restart, in the Kagoshima Prefecture capital April 22, 2015. (Mainichi)

KAGOSHIMA -- Local residents who had sought an injunction to stop the restart of reactors at Sendai Nuclear Power Plant and their supporters were obviously disappointed in the district court's dismissal of their demand, but they called the ruling unjustifiable and vowed not to give up.

The latest decision came as a disappointment particularly because it was handed down in the wake of a ruling by the Fukui District Court on April 14 to ban the restart of two reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama Nuclear Power Plant.

Soon after the decision on the Sendai plant was announced at 10 a.m. on April 22, the plaintiffs' legal team stood in front of the courthouse holding banners that read "demand dismissed," and angry voices could be heard from supporters who had gathered.

The supporters subsequently moved to an open square across from the courthouse, where head attorney Masami Mori explained the content of the decision, a grim expression on his face. The overwhelming sense of disappointment was undeniable among the approximately 150 people who listened as they held posters with slogans protesting the restart.

"The Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA), the Satumasendai Municipal Government, the Kagoshima Prefectural Government, and now the judiciary have approved the reactivation of the nuclear reactors,"

said Akiko Morinaga, a 43-year-old resident of Satsumasendai, where Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai plant is located, and a plaintiff in the case. "It's disheartening that no one is protecting the residents' lives." The head plaintiff in the case, Morinaga is a 3rd-generation atomic bomb victim from Hiroshima; her maternal grandfather was exposed to the bomb when it was dropped on the city in 1945.

In high school, she and her classmates were assigned homework in which they were to ask a war survivor about their experiences. This prompted Morinaga to ask her grandfather about the atomic bomb, but he adamantly refused to speak. Morinaga said that all she knew was what family members told her: that he held an A-bomb survivor's medical certificate.

Morinaga's grandfather died from cancer 20 years ago, taking his painful memories to the grave, and Morinaga's mother has also undergone surgery for cervical cancer. And although it's unclear whether there's a causal relationship between the bomb and her family's cancer history, Morinaga has always been aware of the bomb's horrors.

In 2000 she moved with her husband to Satsumasendai, where her husband's parents lived, and the two of them began working at a glass studio. But it wasn't until 2009, when a plan to additionally construct the plant's No. 3 reactor was made public, that Morinaga threw herself into anti-nuclear activism. Living about 10 kilometers from the Sendai nuclear plant, she had always been vaguely concerned about the proximity to the nuclear power station, but now she could no longer stand back.

As a 3rd-generation A-bomb victim and also as a mother of two daughters, Morinaga wanted to protect them and their hometowns. Learning that a civic group was working toward submitting signatures of people opposed to the reactor expansion to the Kagoshima Prefectural Government on Aug. 6 of that year -- the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima -- Morinaga joined the efforts.

Less than two years later, the Fukushima nuclear disaster struck. In 2012, she joined the lawsuit seeking an injunction on the restart of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant and became the lead plaintiff.

Many local residents find it difficult to openly oppose the reactivation of the plant, since they have family members or know others who work there. But Morinaga says she's had a neighborhood association board member confess to her that they were "in truth, opposed to the nuclear power plant."

"Letting this (decision) bring us down would be tragic," Morinaga said, as if in encouragement of herself.

"We're going to press ahead with the principal lawsuit."

April 22, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Majority of Japanese against nukes

April 22, 2015

Survey shows strong opposition, concern over nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150422p2a00m0na015000c.html>

Seventy percent of Japanese are against restarting the country's nuclear reactors, and 90 percent believe nuclear disaster evacuation plans in their municipality are insufficient, according to a recent survey.

Tokyo Woman's Christian University professor emeritus Hirotada Hirose conducted the opinion survey about Japan's nuclear power plants March 4-16. To eliminate weighting the results towards certain

demographics, polltakers were sent to homes in 200 locales across Japan. A total of 1,200 people between the ages of 15 and 79 responded.

Asked about the possibility of an incident at a nuclear power plant as severe as the Fukushima nuclear crisis, 22 percent of the pollees said they thought such an incident would occur, and another 52 percent said that such an incident was likely to occur. Meanwhile, only 1 percent told the survey that such an incident would not happen, while another 24 percent said such an incident was unlikely to occur.

When asked if they thought evacuation plans mapped out by municipal governments were sufficient, 37 percent of respondents said "absolutely insufficient" and another 50 percent said they were "somewhat insufficient."

Asked about restarting currently idled nuclear reactors, 45 percent said they were "somewhat opposed" and another 26 percent said they were "absolutely opposed." Twenty-four percent of respondents said that they supported restarting reactors "to some extent," while only 4 percent "strongly" supported reactivation.

In addition, 85 percent of the pollees said that permission for restarts should be obtained from all municipalities within 30 kilometers of a nuclear plant, not just from host municipalities as is currently the case. Just 10 percent said the decision to back reactor reactivations should be made solely within host municipalities. Furthermore, 53 percent said that use of nuclear energy should be reduced in phases while approving reactor restarts for the time being.

Hirose says the survey shows that people's sense of danger over nuclear power has not faded in the four years since the Fukushima nuclear crisis began, citing insufficient measures from authorities to prevent future disasters.

Mysterious drone

April 23, 2015

Drone found on roof of PM's office may have been controlled from nearby

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150423p2a00m0na013000c.html>

A small drone with a trace of radiation, which was found on the roof of the prime minister's office on April 22, can be remotely controlled from up to 300 meters away, investigative sources said.

The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is analyzing images on security cameras around the scene, suspecting that the person who flew the four-propeller drone was within several hundred meters from the prime minister's office at the time of the incident.

The drone is highly likely to be one from the "Phantom" series produced by China-based DJI, the sources said.

Drones in the Phantom series can typically fly at about 15 meters per second and their duration of flying is up to 25 minutes, although there are differences in equipment such as cameras and the distances from which they can be remotely controlled between models, according to DJI's website.

One can operate a model equipped with a camera while viewing video images transmitted from the camera to a smartphone.

Drones can generally be operated while viewing them with the naked eye or by watching images sent from cameras mounted on them or by automatically flying them on a preset course using a global positioning system (GPS).

The drone found on the roof of the prime minister's office is a type that can be remotely controlled by viewing the aircraft with the naked eye or by monitoring video images. The sources said investigators believe that the drone can be operated about 300 meters away.

However, since there are models in the Phantom series that can be operated about one kilometer away, investigators are analyzing the performance of the drone they have confiscated.

The sources said the MPD suspects that someone flew the drone at night so that police officers standing guard around the prime minister's office would not notice the object, noting that if flown in the daytime, officers would have noticed the noise of its propellers. The drone, which was originally white, was painted black.

Following the incident, the MPD has posted additional riot police officers in areas around the prime minister's office and the Diet Building to tighten security, and stepped up its monitoring of suspicious unmanned small flying objects around the areas.

Drone likely landed on prime minister's office this week; cesium may be from Fukushima No. 1

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/23/national/cesium-carrying-drone-landed-prime-ministers-helipad-time-march-22-abe-flight/#.VTkR3JPwmos>

Kyodo, Bloomberg, JIJI

LAWS, FALL SHORT: PAGE 2 – A drone carrying a small amount of radioactive cesium that was found on the roof of the prime minister's office may have landed there in the last few days, investigative sources said Thursday, as authorities moved to beef up security and weighed regulating drone flights.

Minister Shinzo Abe used the helipad on the roof on March 22 to fly to Kanagawa Prefecture for a graduation ceremony at the National Defense Academy, the four-propeller drone was not there and no staff members had visited the roof since then, the sources said.

The drone, which measures about 50 cm in diameter, was dry when it was found around 10:20 a.m. on Wednesday, suggesting it had landed after April 20 when it rained in Tokyo.

Sources of radiation found on the drone may be from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the investigators said, which experienced three reactor-core meltdowns after the March 2011 tsunami and earthquake, scattering radioactive material across a large swath of eastern Japan.

The rooftop was not regularly checked by security staff, according to the Metropolitan Police Department, which added that staff at the prime minister's office discovered the drone on the roof Wednesday morning when they were showing new employees around the office.

Investigators continued to analyze footage of surveillance cameras and interview people as they scrambled to find out when the unmanned aircraft landed on the building and who was responsible.

In a related move, the Japan unit of Chinese technology firm DJI, the maker of the drone in question, announced Thursday that it would change how its drones operate. Because the devices are fed with GPS data, no-fly zones can be set by modifying their programs. Areas around airports are already on the list, and the firm said it will now add the prime minister's office and the Imperial Palace.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a press conference on Thursday that the government will consider regulating drone flights by creating legislation during the current Diet session.

"We should start from where we can as soon as possible," the top government spokesman said.

"There is a risk that unmanned aircraft could be used for a terrorist attack at events such as the Olympics or the G-7 summit," Suga told reporters earlier.

Leaders of the G-7 developed countries are scheduled to meet in Japan next year.

The government will convene a meeting of officials from bodies ranging from the police to the land ministry and industry ministry to examine laws and regulations, he said.

The drone was equipped with what appeared to be a small camera and a smoke flare, and was emblazoned with a radiation symbol. Investigators said they also detected trace amounts of radioactive cesium in a liquid container attached to the device.

The cesium found on the device does not exist in nature, and investigators are looking into the possibility that the radiation from the wrecked Fukushima plant could have been added to the liquid.

“This could potentially lead to more regulations on unmanned aircraft,” said Koichi Nakano, a professor of politics at Sophia University in Tokyo. “Much depends on whether the radioactive material found indicates this was an attack.”

The drone was identified by public broadcaster NHK as a Phantom, an aircraft made by Chinese company SZ DJI Technology Co. — the same type that was flown onto the grounds of the White House in January. After that incident, U.S. President Barack Obama spoke of the need for regulations on the use of small unmanned aircraft by civilians in his country.

At present, Japan regards drones as toys and allows them to fly freely at altitudes of up to 250 meters except near airports.

The government is specifically considering setting up no-fly zones for drones over the prime minister’s office, the Imperial Palace and other important facilities. It is also considering allowing the jamming of radio signals to prevent the control of such devices in the vicinity.

The drone’s discovery on the roof of the prime minister’s office seemed likely to push police to take additional steps beyond the investigation. They had been studying ways to detect unmanned aerial devices approaching important facilities since a drone crashed on the grounds of the White House in January.

On Wednesday, **the National Police Agency instructed police departments across the country to enhance the monitoring of airspace above important facilities, such as government buildings, nuclear power plants and airports**, police sources said.

The NPA ordered riot police to watch for the approach of drones at such facilities

Anti-nukes dismayed

April 23, 2015

Anti-nuke activists disheartened over court ruling on reactor restarts in Kagoshima

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201504230054

Anti-nuclear activists were dismayed but local politicians rejoiced after a court refused to halt the restarts of two reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant.

“I doubt (the judges) sincerely examined the damage inflicted by the Fukushima nuclear disaster,” said a lawyer representing the plaintiffs at a news conference after the April 22 ruling by the Kagoshima District Court.

Lawyers held up a banner reading, “We will never succumb,” in front of the district court to protest its rejection of their demand for an injunction against the restarts of the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the nuclear plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture.

Hiroyuki Kawai, a representative of a nationwide anti-nuclear lawyers’ group, told 150 supporters that the ruling was “full of mistakes of fact.”

The rejection follows an injunction issued earlier this month by the Fukui District Court in a separate case that put on hold plans to restart the Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture.

“The ruling is vexing because we wanted to follow the Takahama plant case,” said one of the plaintiffs, Tomomi Tsukada, a 44-year-old company employee from Aira, Kagoshima Prefecture.

But the latest ruling drew high praise from local politicians who want the Sendai plant to resume operations as soon as possible.

“The suit concerns national policy, and I believe the court very carefully examined the case,” Satsuma-Sendai Mayor Hideo Iwakiri told reporters.

City assemblyman Kotaro Narikawa also praised the decision.

“Experts at the Nuclear Regulation Authority cannot have introduced sloppy safety standards,” he said.

“The decision of the Kagoshima District Court is reasonable.”

Sign the petition



from Beyond Nuclear :

Sign global ban on uranium, nuclear power and atomic weapons!

A joint statement by the more than 250 participants from five continents at the recent World Uranium Symposium in Quebec City, Canada calls for a ban on every phase of the uranium fuel chain; an end to the use of nuclear power; and the elimination of nuclear weapons. Please sign the declaration at this link where the full declaration can also be found.

<http://uranium2015.com/en/news/quebec-declaration-uranium>

Mystery of drone resolved

April 24, 2015

Fukui man takes credit for landing drone on Abe's official residence

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/24/national/fukui-man-takes-credit-landing-drone-abes-official-residence/#.VTqKSZPwmos>

Kyodo

A man claiming responsibility for landing the radioactive drone found on the roof of the Prime Minister's Official Residence has turned himself in to the Fukui Prefectural Police, police sources said Friday.

The man, described as a Fukui resident in his 40s, told officers he pulled the stunt **to protest the government's policies on atomic power.**

The police have not yet verified his claims.

A drone reportedly carrying a radioactive payload was found on the roof of the Prime Minister's Official Residence at about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday.

According to the police, the craft was equipped with a camera, what appeared to be two flares, and a brown container containing a liquid that later turned out to have a slight amount of cesium in it.

The aircraft, which had been decorated with a radiation sticker, was identified as a Phantom drone made by SZ DJI Technology Co. of China. The Phantom is only sold in white but the one found on the rooftop had been painted black.

Drone owner against nukes

April 25, 2015

UPDATE: Man who operated drone found in Tokyo was protesting Abe's nuclear policy

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201504250021

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A man held for landing a drone on the roof of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's office in Tokyo said he was protesting the administration's nuclear policy.

Yasuo Yamamoto, 40 and unemployed, turned himself in to the police and was promptly arrested, even though operating the device over Abe's office was not illegal.

Under the Aviation Law, a drone is not recognized as an aircraft. Therefore it is not illegal to operate one over the prime minister's office at an altitude of under 250 meters.

The Metropolitan Police Department arrested Yamamoto on April 25 on suspicion of interfering with the duties of staff members of the prime minister's office in Chiyoda Ward because he left the drone on the roof. It was discovered April 22.

"I was operating the drone around 3:30 in the morning on April 9 to express my opposition to nuclear power generation," police quoted Yamamoto as saying.

Yamamoto, a resident of Obama, Fukui Prefecture, said he placed sand from Fukushima Prefecture, site of the 2011 nuclear disaster, into a plastic container attached to the drone.

Police detected a small level of radiation resulting from radioactive cesium from the container. A seal indicating the presence of a radioactive substance had also been pasted on the container. Police also verified that about 100 grams of sand was in the container.

Yamamoto gave himself up at the Obama Police Station around 8 p.m. on April 24, carrying sand and the console used to control the radio-operated drone.

The culprit drone was a Phantom 2 model manufactured by Chinese drone maker DJI. The drone was equipped with a small digital camera, a device to transmit video footage and a framework to protect its propellers.

The body of the drone was originally white. However, it was apparently painted black. Light-emitting diode lights installed on four places of the drone were also painted black.

During questioning, Yamamoto told the police that **he writes an Internet blog under the name of "Kantei Santa" (Santa at the prime minister's office).**

In a blog entry, Yamamoto wrote that he controlled the flight of a drone from a parking lot in Tokyo's Akasaka district toward the front yard of the prime minister's office around 3:30 a.m. on April 9, but later lost contact.

In another entry, he said he tried to fly the drone toward the prime minister's office last December but gave it up.

Those descriptions match what he told police.

With regard to the sand in the container, **Yamamoto wrote in a blog entry that he went to Fukushima Prefecture last October and again in March to gather "contaminated soil." He wrote that he placed 100 grams of the sand in the container on April 7.**

He started his blog in July 2014. In entries, Yamamoto indicated he planned to take a solitary stand against moves by the Abe administration to restart idled nuclear reactors. "I am a lone wolf," one entry reads. "I will not hesitate to commit a terror act to stop restart (of nuclear reactors)," says another.

After he flew the drone on April 9, Yamamoto wrote in his blog: "I returned home and watched a news program (on TV). But there were no reports (on my drone)."

On April 18, he posted a photo showing him preparing a different drone. "I am steadily making preparations to fly the second arrow," he wrote.

On April 22, after media reports of a drone being found on the roof of the prime minister's office, the blog read, **"The drone was left as it was for two weeks."**

The blog ended in the morning on April 24 with a posting that read, "I am sad because the security at the prime minister's office is incompetent."

Fukui man arrested for landing drone on prime minister's office says he was protesting nuclear power policy

Kyodo

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/25/national/fukui-man-arrested-landing-drone-prime-ministers-office-says-protesting-nuclear-power-policy/#.VTtbqJPwmot>

Police formally arrested a man Saturday on charges of forcible obstruction of official business for flying a small drone found earlier this week on the roof of the prime minister's office, investigators said.

Yasuo Yamamoto, 40, of Obama, Fukui Prefecture, presented himself to prefectural police Friday evening, saying that he flew the drone onto the rooftop of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's office to protest the government's nuclear energy policy.

Yamamoto brought with him sand and what appeared to be a controller for a drone, sources said. The man was quoted as saying that he had put sand from Fukushima Prefecture, home to the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, into a plastic bottle carried by the craft.

Tokyo police confirmed Friday that the bottle contained sand, sources said. They were checking to confirm that it had come from within the prefecture.

According to the Metropolitan Police Department, Yamamoto said he flew the drone toward the prime minister's office at 3:30 a.m. on April 9 — nearly two weeks before it was found Wednesday.

Meanwhile, in a blog entry that appears to have been made by Yamamoto on April 12, he said he left his hometown of Obama on April 7 and arrived at Tokyo's Akasaka district — near the prime minister's office and the Diet building — in the wee hours of April 8 with the intention of flying his drone. But, the blog posting said, bad weather forced him to give up that night, and he returned to the area again the following day and flew the drone from a parking lot between buildings.

The aircraft, which had been decorated with a radiation sticker and was carrying a radioactive payload, was found on the roof of the prime minister's office at about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday. According to the police, the craft was equipped with a camera, what appeared to be two flares, and a brown container containing a liquid that later turned out to have a slight amount of cesium in it.

According to the police, an aerial photo over the roof of the prime minister's office taken on April 15 showed a black object, which matches the color of the drone.

Fukui Prefecture, on the Sea of Japan coast, hosts more than a dozen nuclear reactors.

Last week, the Fukui District Court endorsed a citizens' bid to halt Kansai Electric Power Co.'s push to restart two reactors at the Takahama nuclear power plant on safety grounds. The government, however, said it has no plan to push for restarting reactors, while the power company has appealed the court-issued injunction.

The drone was also equipped with a global positioning system that provides information about its flight path, sources said. A small digital camera on the drone, believed to be a Phantom2 sold by China-based DJI, was connected to a transmitter able to send recorded footage to a remote monitor. The Phantom drone made by DJI is only sold in white but the one found on the rooftop had been painted black.

On Friday, the government began considering legislation to regulate drone flights above key facilities. Plans under consideration include obliging buyers to register their name and address, as officials of relevant ministries held their first meeting on the issue at the prime minister's office.

"We need to immediately establish" legislation on drone usage, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said at the meeting of officials from police and ministries overseeing such areas as transport, internal affairs and industry.

The government is also expected to consider introducing a licensing system, rules on the maintenance of drones and an obligation to buy insurance in case of an accident, according to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

Suga described the incident as “a grave issue in terms of crisis management” and said drones “could have a substantial impact on public safety and privacy protection, depending on how they are used.”

Toshihiro Nikai, chairman of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party’s General Council, said Friday that lawmakers need to submit a bill to prohibit drones from being flown above important facilities.

Suga, the top government spokesman, said the previous day that the government will consider legislation to regulate drone flights, during the current Diet session scheduled to wrap up in late June.

Waste storage in Chiba: Unacceptable?

April 27, 2015

Civic group opposes waste storage site plan

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150427_28.html

Apr. 27, 2015 - Updated 10:14 UTC+2

A group of residents from Ichihara City, near Tokyo, is seeking to block a plan to store radioactive waste in an adjacent city.

The Environment Ministry designated Tokyo Electric Power Company's compound in Chiba City a candidate site for a facility to store waste containing fallout from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident. The waste contains radioactive cesium exceeding 8,000 becquerels per kilogram.

On Monday, the group from Ichihara City visited the office of Chiba Prefecture, where both Ichihara and Chiba City are located. It delivered a petition addressed to Governor Kensaku Morita of Chiba Prefecture to oppose the construction plan.

The group argues that the area surrounding the candidate site contains active faults that could cause a powerful earthquake. It says a storage facility built there would not be able to withstand such a disaster, and worries that such an incident could hurt sales of seaweed produced in Tokyo Bay.

Group leader Yoshikichi Hayashi says the Environment Ministry's plan is unacceptable, as there are schools and residential areas within 3 kilometers from the candidate site.

The ministry hopes to build storage facilities for contaminated soil and other waste in Chiba and 4 other prefectures and is seeking approval from local officials.

So far, it has proposed candidate storage locations in Miyagi and Tochigi Prefectures. But prospects for construction are uncertain due to strong opposition from local residents.

New york rally



April 27, 2015

Thousands rally for abolition of nukes as hibakusha ranks thin

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/27/national/thousands-rally-abolition-nukes-hibakusha-ranks-thin/#.VT5P3ZPwmos>

Kyodo

NEW YORK – Atomic bomb survivors from Japan and peace campaigners from around the world marched through the streets of New York on Sunday to push for the abolition of nuclear weapons on the eve of a U.N. nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation conference.

Around 7,500 people carrying banners and signs chanted “No nukes!” and “No more Hiroshima!” and other slogans as they walked about 3 km toward the United Nations, where the conference to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was to start Monday.

Although observers say it will not be easy for NPT members to produce a final document by consensus amid differences on the issues, aging atomic bomb survivors hope the discussions will bring nuclear weapons abolition within sight.

At a rally held ahead of the parade, Yuko Nakamura, who survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945, recalled that more than 200 students at her school died when the United States dropped the bomb. She was 13 years old at the time.

“The students were ready to die for their country (because it was wartime), but, deep down, they wanted to live. . . . I want you to know that an atomic bomb will destroy a city instantly and take away people’s lives with no mercy. It is not something that can be allowed from a humanitarian point of view,” she said. Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui also joined the rally. “Now is the time to transform your power into a concrete movement to create a world without nuclear weapons,” he told the participants.

Toward the end of the event, more than 7 million signatures on petitions from Japan and other countries seeking negotiations to eliminate the world’s nuclear arsenals were submitted to Taous Feroukhi, the Algerian ambassador who will chair the NPT review conference, and Angela Kane, top U.N. official for disarmament affairs. The conference will continue through May 22.

“We really must renew our commitment to carry the heavy torch of responsibility for achieving this goal — a world free of nuclear weapons,” Kane said, noting that the average age of the A-bomb survivors is close to 80.

Some participants said they were disappointed with the turnout and the drop in younger participants. Kim Bergier, a 64-year-old activist of the Michigan Stop the Nuclear Bombs Campaign, said she felt the overall number was “not big enough” compared with 2010, when the previous NPT review conference was held.

“I feel a stronger commitment for those who do show up . . . but there are also too many gray hairs, there are too many hibakusha that this will be the last time we’ll probably see them,” she said.

New York rally (2)

April 27, 2015

As NPT review kicks off, New York rally demands end to nuclear weapons



<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/04/27/world/npt-review-kicks-new-york-rally-demands-end-nuclear-weapons/#.VT30hZPwmos>

AP

NEW YORK – Global activists presented 8 million petitions to the U.N. disarmament chief on Sunday demanding a world free of nuclear weapons, kicking off a conference by world powers to review progress toward eventually achieving total disarmament.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iran's foreign minister are both expected to speak at the conference Monday amid intense interest in the fate of negotiations over Iran's nuclear program.

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, or NPT, Review Conference happens every five years, and experts have warned that little progress is expected this time, especially with relations cool between the two largest nuclear powers, Russia and the United States.

The more than a thousand demonstrators demanded that the world's nine nuclear-armed countries do far more toward cutting stockpiles.

Many protestors were from Japan, the only country ever hit by a nuclear attack. Fragile survivors of the U.S. attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 70 years ago led the way in wheelchairs.

"I hope we don't have to have the NPT five years from now!" said 83-year-old Hiroshima survivor Setsuko Thurlow.

The U.N. disarmament chief, Angela Kane, stood by the wall of boxes of petitions and told the crowd that receiving the millions of names was "very humbling." She said she had signed one of the petitions herself when she was in Japan.

Kane said she spoke Friday with U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and told the crowd, "He's with you." As the march made its way uptown past the Manhattan brunch crowd, some bystanders showed little grasp of the number of nuclear weapons remaining around the world today.

Guesses ranged from 120 to 150,000 to "no idea whatsoever." Experts estimate it's more like 16,000.

"Hundreds. Thousands. Doesn't matter. They're all bad," said Hal Alterwein, 75. "All you need is one nut case to blow it up."

The other nuclear-armed countries are Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. Only the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China have signed on to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

"Are they just going to go ahead?"

April 29, 2015

Outrage in Fukushima Prefecture at gov't's revival plan for nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150429p2a00m0na006000c.html>

The national energy supply plan released by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry on April 28 was met with dismay in Fukushima Prefecture, since its proposed national energy mix for 2030 is premised upon a revival of nuclear power -- despite the existence of numerous local electric power utilities that use renewable energy.

More than 110,000 Fukushima Prefecture residents remain displaced both within and outside the prefecture following the 2011 meltdowns at the Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant.

In the village of Iitate, where all residents remain displaced, local villagers raised funds for the Iitate Electric Power Co. -- a locally produced, locally consumed utility that is premised upon the creation of electric power using natural sources from the village.

Laments company president Minoru Kobayashi, 62, "Is the government truly planning to continue relying upon nuclear power, even after causing such a major disaster?"

Iitate village lost its rice fields, forests, and livestock -- in other words, its lifeblood -- due to the nuclear disaster. Kobayashi established the company last year in September, basing it upon the slogan "a power station of the villagers, by the villagers, for the villagers."

The firm began selling power generated at a photovoltaic power plant that was launched in the village this year in February, and also has future plans to generate wind and biomass energy.

"As time passes, are they just going to go ahead and forget about what happened at the time of the accident, and about the disaster areas?" asked Kobayashi, mincing no words against the government.

Prior to the establishment of the Iitate Electric Power Co., citizens in the Fukushima Prefecture city of Kitakata funded and set up the Aizu Electric Power Co. in August 2013. Commented company president Yauemon Sato, 64, "I find the government's attachment to nuclear power completely incomprehensible." The company began operating a large-scale photovoltaic power plant last year in October, and has set up solar panels in a total of 23 locations. This fiscal year, it plans to generate a total of around 2.23 million kilowatts of energy for some 700 households.

"The government should base its energy ratio upon the premise of not using nuclear power -- and it should accelerate the speed at which it is implementing renewable energies," Sato said pointedly.

Kagoshima residents appeal

May 6, 2015

Kagoshima residents appeal court's go-ahead to restart Sendai reactors

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/06/national/crime-legal/kagoshima-residents-appeal-courts-go-ahead-to-restart-sendai-reactors/#.VUpu-JPwmic>

Kyodo

KAGOSHIMA – Local residents on Wednesday appealed a court decision last month dismissing calls to stop the restart of two reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant in southwestern Japan's Kagoshima Prefecture.

The appeal, filed with the Fukuoka High Court's Miyazaki branch, disputes the Kagoshima District Court's rejection of a local call for an injunction to stop the restart of the Nos. 1 and 2 reactors at the Kyushu Electric Power Co. plant.

While the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is pushing to restart reactors taken offline after the 2011 Fukushima meltdowns, many in the country remain opposed to such moves due to lingering safety concerns.

On April 22, the district court ruled that there were no “irrationalities” in Japan’s new safety standards adopted in the wake of the Fukushima crisis, and that, having cleared those standards, the Sendai plant is fit for operation.

Speaking at a press conference, lawyers representing the residents said **many parts of the district court’s decision were logically unsound and that the plaintiffs hope for a new ruling before the reactors come back online.**

Kyushu Electric hopes to resume operation at the plant by summer.

Preaching to the converted?

May 7, 2015

Proponents, foes of nuclear energy content with preaching to the converted

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201505070071>



the Asahi Shimbun

By SATOSHI OTANI/ Staff Writer

A lecturer at a meeting in Osaka touted the improved safety of nuclear reactors, denounced unfounded fears of radioactivity and stressed that radiation is naturally all around us.

But at a similar-sized meeting held later in Tokyo, a different lecturer warned of the terrifying dangers of radiation, particularly to children, and predicted that Fukushima Prefecture would become a wasteland. About all the two sides had in common was their unwillingness to discuss the issue of nuclear energy with the other camp.

Since the Fukushima nuclear disaster unfolded in March 2011, proponents and opponents of nuclear energy have run campaigns advocating their versions of the truth about nuclear energy.

Still wide apart, both sides appear content to spread their respective messages to like-minded people, a situation that experts say is counterproductive.

The Consumer Affairs Agency in January held a “risk communication” session in a building in Osaka regarding radioactive materials that may be found in food.

“The only thing we learn in school about radiation is ‘nuclear weapons and death,’” the male lecturer told about 20 participants. “That is why so many people are frightened.”

The lecturer continued: “If radiation really was dangerous, humans would not have been able to survive for so long by bearing offspring. I want you to know the truth.”

The participants measured radiation in the room to find an example of the natural levels that exist around them.

The aim of the risk communication project is to inform nutritionists and public health nurses about radiation in hopes that they will relay that knowledge to their local communities and schools.

The project began in fiscal 2013 after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

The session in Osaka involved employees of food companies who are in positions to deal with radiation.

“I believe I can explain to my colleagues because I have developed a certain comfort level about radiation,” said an employee at a major beverage company.

The pro-nuclear stance at the lecture should come as no surprise.

The lecturer previously worked as a researcher with the Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry, which is backed by the major electric power companies.

The lecturer concluded his talk with a word about nuclear reactors: “I believe risks have been reduced considerably because safety measures have been implemented.”

The Consumer Affairs Agency has commissioned the Japan Atomic Energy Relations Organization to handle the risk communication project. The organization’s bylaws state that it will “actively conduct edification and dissemination of knowledge related to the peaceful usage of nuclear energy.”

The Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan is the largest contributor of fees to the organization, although the actual amount has not been publicized.

About 18 months after the 1999 deadly accident at JCO Co.’s nuclear fuel facility in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, the organization compiled a research report about risk communication on nuclear power.

“While attitudes toward nuclear energy have hardened due to the accident that resulted in two deaths, there is also an imbalance because there is societal acceptance of car accidents that result in 10,000 fatalities a year,” the report said.

The report added, “General magazines will very rarely publish articles promoting nuclear energy.”

To deal with that situation, the report proposed “making efforts to have the general public observe workers at nuclear plants so they can hold a sense of familiarity.”

Kohei Urano, a professor emeritus of environmental safety management at Yokohama National University, defines risk communication as “experts and citizens sharing information related to dangers in order to seek a solution from an equal standing.”

“Trying to gain the understanding of participants by only explaining from one side is not risk communication,” he said. “Moreover, if an organization handling the project is on one side of the debate,

there is a strong possibility that the views of those who hold concerns about radioactive materials will not be reflected.”

A Consumer Affairs Agency official in charge of the lectures was asked if people opposed to nuclear power have been invited to talks.

“It would not do for our organization to recognize certain individuals as ‘opponents,’” the official said.

The lecture series was held on 55 occasions around Japan in fiscal 2013 and 2014. The total budget for the series and other risk communication events, such as symposiums, is 45 million yen (\$376,000), funded in part by the government’s special account for rebuilding after the 2011 natural disasters.

Anti-nuclear groups have held gatherings around Japan--often without inviting anyone from the other side.

In April, about 20 participants attended a lecture in Tokyo’s Chiyoda Ward on the theme of radiation exposure checks in Fukushima Prefecture.

“There are many cases of malignant cancer,” the lecturer said. “Children are in danger.”

He also criticized scholars who push nuclear energy as untrustworthy. He concluded his lecture by saying it will be impossible to live in Fukushima.

A document distributed to the participants contained a section that said, “Risk communication events sponsored by local governments do more harm than good and require scrutiny.”

A few days after the event, the lecturer admitted that he had no experience in specialized research on radiation.

“Even an ordinary citizen like myself can understand that something fearful is occurring just by studying a little,” he said.

When asked why he didn’t take his case directly to the central government or electric power companies, the man said: “The nuclear energy proponents are the ones who must be held accountable, but they have not revised their stance at all. I have no intention of meeting with them because it would be meaningless to even talk with them.”

Hideyuki Ban, a co-director of the Citizens’ Nuclear Information Center, a nonprofit organization, makes it a point to accept invitations to government-sponsored sessions about nuclear reactors. However, being an opponent of nuclear energy, Ban is in a decided minority at such events.

Although his opinions are usually not reflected in the conclusions, Ban still attends the meetings.

“If one wants to get one’s arguments across to change society even a little, the only alternative is to appear at the same forum for discussions,” Ban said.

By SATOSHI OTANI/ Staff Writer

4.7 kilograms of cesium

article published on the blog of Nuclear-free by 2045?

<http://nf2045.blogspot.fr/2015/05/47-kilograms-of-cesium-137.html>

2015/05/06

4.7 Kilograms of Cesium 137

The Trouble with Nuclear Power

**Professor Hiroaki Koide speaks at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan (FCCJ), Tokyo
April 25, 2014**

(1:13:51, in Japanese with an English interpreter)

Nuclear energy expert Professor Hiroaki Koide was recently invited to speak about the Fukushima Daiichi catastrophe at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. Professor Koide is known for being one of the few dissident nuclear experts in Japan who defected from the infamous nuclear village. He has now become famous, as much as one can become famous while being largely ignored by mainstream society, for his expert critiques of the nuclear establishment and the way that the Fukushima Daiichi catastrophe has been handled.

During his talk on April 25, 2015, Professor Koide reviewed the history of the Fukushima meltdowns for the benefit of the journalists in the room who might not have been familiar with it. He emphasized how badly the public has been deceived all along about the severity of the disaster. Radiation levels inside the damaged reactors are so high that there is no way yet conceived (nor is there likely to be a way conceived in the future) for man or machine to move the lost nuclear waste to a safer location. There is no way to stop the leaking of radiation into the ocean, and there is a finite limit on how much radioactive water can be stored. He suggested the use of air or liquid metal cooling systems, but thought that eventually the Japanese authorities will concede defeat and just entomb the whole site, somehow.

The only development that gave him a small sense of relief was that the spent fuel from Unit 4 had been removed to a "less dangerous" place. Until that operation was concluded, there had been a constant danger that the damaged building containing the spent fuel would collapse in an earthquake and leave a burning heap of radioactive waste that would have forced the population of Tokyo to evacuate.

These circumstances are all familiar to people who have been following the aftermath of the catastrophe over the past four years. The unique and most interesting thing Professor Koide related was the information at the end of his talk about exactly how much Cesium 137 (according to what can be derived from TEPCO's data) was released in the meltdowns of the reactor cores and the fires in the spent fuel pools. He stated that this isotope was the one of most concern to him, even though there were many others to worry about. There was also heavy metal contamination caused by the release of non-radioactive materials in the fuel rods, but he limited his discussion to Cesium 137 because it is an abundant, long-lasting isotope (half-life of 30 years) which has a significant impact on biochemical processes.

He mentioned that the numbers tossed about when referring to the disaster are so astronomical as to be meaningless to most people. It is difficult to impress upon people the significance of peta and tera becquerels and so on. What do these mean? When should we worry? He asked rhetorically for the audience to guess how many kilograms of Cesium 137 were actually released in the catastrophe, then he answered that, remarkably, the total was only 4.7 kilograms, of which 0.75 kg. fell on Japan. The rest drifted eastward over the ocean, or directly into it.

In mentioning these figures, Professor Koide drove home the point that it is extremely difficult for humans to conceive of the danger that radioactive materials pose relative to their size and weight. It is the enormous hazard-per-gram ratio that makes nuclear energy so easy to ignore when reactors operate normally, and so difficult to manage when they don't.

Since the catastrophe struck, communities all over northern Japan have frantically tried to "decontaminate" by scraping off topsoil and storing it in plastic bags in "temporary" storage sites. The photos of these sites, some of them stretching out for hundreds of meters, are now famous symbols of the catastrophe. As the bags of soil were full of seeds, they are now sprouting weeds and grasses, so they have effectively become new radioactive plantations partitioned meaninglessly by decomposing plastic. All this dirt was moved in a desperate attempt to collect 750 grams of a fine mist of radioactive particles spread over thousands of square kilometers.

When people say that a small soda can of uranium could give you all the energy you need for your lifetime, it is important to know that such people are exploiting your intuitive but misguided sense of how size and weight relate to danger. When it comes to the threats posed by radiation, we are led astray if we rely on our evolved instincts for judging threats in our surroundings. As Professor Koide pointed out, if a person were able to hold an amount of Cesium 137 large enough to be tangible, that person wouldn't be alive much longer.

There are some scientists on the pro-nuclear side who have made the radical claim that it is precisely these miniscule quantities of cesium that make the response to the Fukushima catastrophe an extreme over-reaction. They insist that there would be no noticeable impact on health far into the future if there were no evacuations and no attempt at decontamination. Professor Koide was asked about this in the question period after his talk and he dismissed such minimizing. He spoke with typical polite Japanese understatement, but it was clear that he was implying that these scientists should shut their mouths and stop making people doubt their sensible decision to minimize exposure to radiation as much as possible. He reminded everyone that the measures taken after the disaster were made according to laws based on the standards set by the nations that use and promote nuclear energy. He suggested that the minimizers should focus their energies on changing these laws (good luck with that, knock yourselves out, he seemed to imply), but in the meantime they should shut up and stop distracting the public with the suggestion that everyone should just suck up the extra radiation and be happy.

More and more anti-nuke support

May 11, 2015

Japan Political Pulse: Increasing resistance to nuclear power

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20150511p2a00m0na009000c.html>

I recently had the opportunity to see 73-year-old former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi for the first time in a while. The heart of our spirited discussion could be summed up in the following comment: "At the grassroots level, there's an increasing move toward abandoning nuclear power." Excerpts from the interview follow:

Mainichi: How has the movement on abandoning nuclear power been going recently?

Koizumi: "It's firmly rooted, firmly rooted indeed. When I go to the movies, concerts and Kabuki performances, men and women of all ages come up to me asking to shake my hand, saying, 'Good luck with eliminating nuclear power.' There was one person who said that thanks to me, they weren't being labelled as left wing or being affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party (when they supported abandoning nuclear power)."

M: There doesn't seem to be as much debate as before.

K: "The mass media is being held back. The nuclear power industry has a far reach -- from iron and steel to construction, machinery, cement, and the (computer) systems market. This support structure is considerable."

M: Have you been giving lectures recently?

K: "I have, about two or three times a week. Next month I'm speaking in Kagoshima, but the venue has changed from the place that was originally scheduled. My father (Junya Koizumi, former director-general of the Defense Agency) is from that area, so I know a lot of people there, but there are some who find it a nuisance for me to come (when the reactivation of a nuclear reactor in the prefecture is approaching)."

M: Going around advocating the elimination of nuclear power isn't easy, is it?

K: "I wouldn't say that. As they say, things in society are like clouds over the moon and wind through the flowers. People leave those they have feelings for and end up with people they don't have feelings for."

--

It seems that the former prime minister, quoting from an old verse saying that what happens in society is beyond our control, has not thrown in the towel.

Last month, the Kagoshima District Court turned down a move to block reactivation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture. How does Koizumi feel about this?

"It not unexpected," he said. "Since the Ikata lawsuit (against construction of a nuclear plant in Ehime Prefecture, which ended with residents losing in a Supreme Court ruling in 1992), the government's intentions have gotten through."

While the former prime minister takes this in his stride, he seems dissatisfied with the Kagoshima District Court's position on new safety standards for nuclear reactors and the judgment of the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA), and "upped the voltage" on this issue.

"There are a lot of inconsistencies. The very head of the NRA is saying, 'They (the nuclear reactors) might have passed safety standards, but we're not going to call them safe.' But then the government is saying, 'They've passed safety standards; they're the toughest safety standards in the world so we're going to restart them.'

"They haven't made comparisons with the rest of the world. There are many shortcomings if compared with America. Why don't they say it straight? It's a wonder they can lie just like that."

In public opinion polls, there remains solid support for a breakaway from nuclear power.

"There's still a lot of opposition (to nuclear power). The average person knows it. There's an increasing move toward abandoning nuclear power," Koizumi said.

I told Koizumi that I doubted reality would change.

"It'll change," Koizumi replied. "I won't be deterred, though my foes may be legion." The former prime minister was quoting Mencius. Once you had conviction, the thing to do was to advance, even in the face of countless opponents, he was saying.

"Don't get impatient. Don't rely on other people. Don't give up. It's a democratic country so in the end it comes down to the will of the people," Koizumi said.

I asked the former prime minister what he thought of the current administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"I don't want to give an evaluation. But when it comes to nuclear power plants we don't see eye to eye. It's a root problem. If you're asking whether it's all right to leave my mistakes (promoting nuclear power under the Koizumi administration) as they are, that's not right. If you try, you can do it. Considering the changes of the past, I don't think (eliminating nuclear power) is unachievable."

Consider the 1960s, when there was a move from coal to oil, and the 70s, when the premise of relying on oil crumbled. Things can change, and they have to -- that's my conviction. (By Takao Yamada, Special Senior Writer)

May 11, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Drone intended "express opposition to nuclear power"

May 16, 2015

Antinuclear activist' says drone stunt was simply to attract attention

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201505160032

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A self-professed antinuclear activist indicted May 15 for landing a drone on the roof of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's office in Tokyo last month told investigators his action was intended to draw attention, but not on the scale of a terrorist attack.

"I thought I could gain public attention if I used a drone," Yasuo Yamamoto is said to have told investigators. "I chose a method that was more apparent than a demonstration, but not as shocking as a terrorist attack."

Yamamoto, who is 40 and unemployed, added: "Drones are a hot topic and anything done with them leaves an impact. I thought of using it after I saw videos of pizza deliveries made using similar devices." Yamamoto, from Obama, Fukui Prefecture, was charged by Tokyo prosecutors with forcible obstruction of business at the prime minister's office in Chiyoda Ward by landing the drone on its roof April 9. It is not illegal under the Aviation Law to operate a drone at an altitude of under 250 meters, although that is set to change.

According to Tokyo prosecutors, Yamamoto operated the drone, which was carrying soil containing radioactive materials and a flare, from a parking lot in the capital's Minato Ward around 3:40 a.m.

It landed on the roof of the prime minister's office, but was not discovered until April 22. Prosecutors determined that Yamamoto's actions had interfered with the duties of staff members at the office.

Yamamoto said, "I flew the drone to express my opposition to nuclear power," when he turned himself in to police in Obama on April 24. But when he was later asked how he became opposed to nuclear power, he replied, "I don't remember," according to sources.

Yamamoto left his company last July and visited Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai nuclear power plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, he told investigators.

"I began taking stock of my life after I visited nuclear power plants across the country. I was also growing weary of my age," he said.

300km march against restart

May 16, 2015

Protesters begin 311-km march against restart of Sendai nuclear plant

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150516p2g00m0dm007000c.html>

KAGOSHIMA (Kyodo) -- An antinuclear group embarked Saturday on a 311-kilometer march to protest against the restart of the Sendai plant in southwestern Japan, which is expected to be reactivated in late July at the earliest.

About 20 people will take turns participating in the 12-day march through May 27 from the city of Kagoshima to the headquarters of Kyushu Electric Power Co. in Fukuoka, which operates the two-unit Sendai nuclear complex in Kagoshima Prefecture.

The distance of the march was chosen to reflect the date of the March 11, 2011 disaster, often referred to as 3/11, when a devastating earthquake and tsunami triggered the world's worst nuclear crisis since the 1986 Chernobyl accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

Protesters are scheduled to submit to Kyushu Electric signatures of 100,000 people calling for meetings to explain to local residents the planned restart of the Sendai plant.

The Fukushima disaster has resulted in all of Japan's nuclear reactors being shut down by the end of September 2013 amid safety concerns. The No.1 unit at the Sendai plant is seen as the closest to resumption after obtaining a safety clearance last September.

May 16, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Alternative symposium in Shioya

May 15, 2015

Opponents of nuclear waste site hold symposium to counter gov't forum on same day

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150515p2a00m0na006000c.html>

UTSUNOMIYA -- While the Environment Ministry held a forum here on the night of May 14 on building disposal sites for radioactive waste and other debris caused by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, opponents of one candidate site held a large-scale symposium in Shioya.

The ministry held the forum in the prefectural capital in connection with plans to build disposal sites in Tochigi and four other prefectures. Meanwhile, **the opponents held the symposium in Shioya, about 22 kilometers away from Utsunomiya, under the theme of local natural riches.**

About 180 people attended the Environment Ministry's forum, the second in a series that began in April in Sendai. Officials in charge of designated radioactive waste briefed the participants on the disposal scheme and sought their understanding for constructing a disposal site in the prefecture. Some of the participants made remarks such as, "If it's so safe, build it in Tokyo," and, **"We can't trust the central government because it covers up bad data."**

The Environment Ministry told the Mainichi Shimbun that it held the forum -- designed to win understanding from Tochigi prefectural residents -- in Utsunomiya rather than Shioya because transportation in the prefectural capital was more convenient, allowing more people to attend.

The symposium in Shioya, organized by a coalition of groups opposed to the proposed disposal site, drew about 1,100 people. Its venue, a high school gym, was packed with local residents and about 200 people watched the event on an outdoor screen. The participants confirmed their resolve to protect the local environment. A 72-year-old man said, "The Environment Ministry's forum is an event only for convenient explanations. If we participate, we will be counted as supporters."

May 15, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

NRA approves restart of Ikata



May 20, 2015

NRA approves restart for third nuclear plant

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/20/national/japan-approves-third-nuclear-plant-restart/#.VVw8wEbwmic>

Reuters, Kyodo, Bloomberg, AFP-JIJI

Japan's nuclear regulator signed off on the basic safety of a reactor at a third nuclear plant on Wednesday, as the country inches toward rebooting its atomic industry more than four years after the crisis began at Tepco's Fukushima No.1 facility.

The decision will be a boost for operator Shikoku Electric Power Co., which relied on its sole Ikata nuclear power station in southwestern Japan for about 40 percent of its electricity output before the meltdowns at Fukushima led to the shutdown of all the country's reactors.

But the reactor is not expected to go back online before winter, as Shikoku Electric has yet to obtain local approval and finish other necessary procedures.

For the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, resuming nuclear power, which provided about a third of the electricity supply before the triple meltdown in Fukushima, is key to lifting the economy out of two decades of anaemic growth.

Japan has switched to fossil fuels to compensate for the closure of reactors, pushing imports of liquefied natural gas to a record-high ¥7.78 trillion (\$65 billion) in the financial year ended March 31.

The safety approval is still only one of three needed before the Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NRA) gives its final sign off. The consent of local authorities, which is seen as a formality, is also required, along with operational checks.

At a meeting on Wednesday, the NRA's commissioners signed off on a provisional assessment that says the Ikata reactor meets new design standards introduced in the wake of Fukushima. The decision will be open to public comment for about a month before being formalized.

Located about 700 km (660 miles) west-southwest of Tokyo on Shikoku Island, the Ikata No. 3 reactor started operations in 1994 and has a capacity of 890 megawatts.

The future of the Ikata plant's two other reactors, each with capacity of 566 megawatts, is unclear. One is almost 40 years old, which is the lifetime limit for reactors in Japan without a special extension that will be costly to achieve.

Shikoku Electric hasn't applied for restarts of that reactor or the No. 2 unit, which began operations in 1982.

Two other nuclear plants operated by Kansai Electric Power and Kyushu Electric Power have passed the first stage of regulatory checks.

Operators also have to overcome legal hurdles. Anti-nuclear activists have stepped up petitioning the judiciary to block restarts, with a majority of the public opposed to atomic power.

Residents near the Ikata plant filed a lawsuit in December 2011 to mothball the station, but a decision has yet to be made.

In a related move, the Fukui District Court has rejected Kansai Electric Power Co.'s appeal of a ruling that prevents the utility from restarting two reactors at its Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture, according to Tadashi Matsuda, a representative for the plaintiffs who won the case.

The court dismissal was decided Monday but not announced to the media. A court official declined to comment when contacted Tuesday. Kansai Electric representatives couldn't be reached for comment.

The Fukui District Court issued an injunction in April preventing the utility from moving ahead with plans to restart the reactors.

The court said at the time that new safety regulations introduced following the Fukushima disaster of 2011 are still too lax to ensure the safety of the two reactors at the Takahama station.

Kansai Electric, the utility most dependent on nuclear power in Japan, had called the ruling unacceptable. The rejected appeal throws yet another roadblock in the utility's path to resuming operations at its nuclear plants.

The meltdowns at Tepco's wrecked Fukushima No. 1 plant forced the country's entire fleet of reactors offline in the months that followed, amid deepening public distrust of atomic energy.

The central government says the economy needs nuclear power — a technology that once supplied more than a quarter of Japan's electricity — to meet its energy demand.

NRA approves draft assessment on Ikata

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150520_22.html

May 20, 2015 - Updated 05:33 UTC+2

Japan's nuclear regulator has taken steps toward restarting the Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture, western Japan.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority unanimously approved its draft assessment on safety measures for the plant's No. 3 reactor on Wednesday.

The draft assessment effectively approves safety measures set forth by the plant's operator, Shikoku

Electric Power Company, and clears the way for restarting the reactor.

The NRA says the utility's measures meet new government requirements introduced after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident in March 2011.

Regulators say the measures, which include raising the maximum magnitude of a possible earthquake and installing a command center capable of withstanding emergencies, are reasonable.

They also note that the utility has addressed the issue of using mixed-oxide fuel, which includes plutonium extracted from spent nuclear fuel.

They say effective plans are in place to prevent meltdowns in severe accidents.

The assessment was based on the premise that the utility will not restart the No.1 and No.2 reactors. Putting them back online would require more screenings envisioning simultaneous accidents of multiple reactors, including No.3 reactor.

Nuclear Regulation Authority Chairman Shunichi Tanaka says regulators will continue a thorough assessment in the next stage which includes approving the details of equipment designs.

Ikata is the third plant to reach the assessment stage after the Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture and the Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The NRA will now hear public comments for 30 days before formally approving the assessment.

But quake-proofing work is scheduled to take until autumn of this year and Shikoku Electric must receive approval for equipment designs, pass inspections and obtain local consent before restarting the reactor.

Observers say a restart before winter is unlikely.

May 19, 2015

Ikata reactor expected to clear NRA screening

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150520_05.html

May 19, 2015 - Updated 21:47 UTC+2

Japan's nuclear regulator is to submit a draft assessment on the safety measures for a reactor at the Ikata plant in western Japan.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority will present the draft assessment for the No.3 reactor at the plant in Ehime Prefecture at a meeting on Wednesday.

The NRA has been discussing for nearly 2 years whether the safety measures of the operator, Shikoku Electric Power, meet the new government requirements that were introduced after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis.

The regulator asked Shikoku Electric Power Company to raise the maximum magnitude of a possible earthquake, and to install a command center that would be used to deal with a severe accident.

The operator decided to take additional measures such as improving quake resistance and installing pumps for pouring water into reactors or containment vessels in the event of severe accidents.

If the commissioners find no problems with the draft, the NRA will hear public comments for 30 days and formally approve the assessment.

Ikata is the 3rd plant to reach the assessment stage after the Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture and the Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Observers say the Ikata reactor could be restarted later this year after equipment designs are approved and onsite inspections are passed. Local consent must also be obtained.

Fukui court rejects Kepco's appeal

May 19, 2015

Fukui court rejects Kansai Electric appeal of reactor ruling

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/19/national/crime-legal/fukui-court-rejects-kansai-electric-appeal-of-reactor-ruling/#.VVw_S0bwmic

Bloomberg, AFP-JIJI

The Fukui District Court has rejected Kansai Electric Power Co.'s appeal of a ruling that prevents the utility from restarting two reactors at its Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture, according to Tadashi Matsuda, a representative for the plaintiffs who won the case.

The court dismissal was decided Monday but not announced to the media. A court official declined to comment when contacted Tuesday. Kansai Electric representatives couldn't be reached for comment. The Fukui District Court issued an injunction in April preventing the utility from moving ahead with plans to restart the reactors.

The court said at the time that new safety regulations introduced following the Fukushima disaster of 2011 are still too lax to ensure the safety of the two reactors at the Takahama station.

Kansai Electric, the utility most dependent on nuclear power in Japan, had termed the ruling unacceptable.

The rejected appeal throws yet another roadblock in the utility's path to resuming operations at its nuclear plants more than four years after the meltdowns at Fukushima No. 1.

The accident forced Japan's entire fleet of reactors offline over the following months amid deepening public suspicion over the technology.

The central government says the economy needs nuclear power — a technology that once supplied more than a quarter of Japan's electricity — to meet its energy demand.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has backed an industry push to return to nuclear power, with manufacturers complaining about the high cost of electricity produced from dollar-denominated fossil fuels.

Idogawa sues Govt and Tepco

May 21, 2015

Ex-Futaba mayor sues state, Tepco over Fukushima nuclear disaster

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/05/21/national/crime-legal/ex-futaba-mayor-sues-state-tepco-over-fukushima-nuclear-disaster/#.VV3-nkbwmid>

JJI

Katsutaka Idogawa, the former mayor of Futaba in Fukushima Prefecture, filed a lawsuit against the central government and Tokyo Electric Power Co. on Wednesday for exposing him to excessive radiation since the March 2011 nuclear disaster.

Seeking ¥148.5 million in damages, Idogawa, 69, claimed that sloppy management by the central government and Tepco caused him to receive radiation over the annual limit during the early phase of the disaster, when hydrogen explosions and the venting of steam from reactor containment vessels took place.

Futaba is one of the two municipalities that host Tepco's crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the site of the disaster.

At a news conference, Idogawa expressed regrets for his inability to protect local residents from radiation. He also asked Futaba residents to join the lawsuit.

In his petition, Idogawa claimed to have received the excessive radiation between March 11, 2011, when the disaster started, and March 19 that year, when residents evacuated Futaba for Saitama Prefecture.

This was because as Futaba mayor he took part in work to collect information, secure places to which local residents could evacuate, and instruct and guide fleeing locals, according to the petition.

The suit, filed with the Tokyo District Court, is the first seeking compensation for health damage from events early in the nuclear crisis, according to Idogawa's attorney.

Ex-mayor sues state, TEPCO for stress caused by nuclear disaster

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201505210042>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

A former mayor who was exposed to high levels of radiation after the 2011 nuclear disaster is suing the central government and the operator of the wrecked Fukushima power plant for stress.

Katsutaka Idogawa, the former mayor of Futaba in Fukushima Prefecture, filed the lawsuit on May 20 at the Tokyo District Court. He is seeking 148.5 million yen (\$1.22 million) in compensation.

"Even after the accident, I was forced to stay in the town as mayor and thus exposed to a high dose of radiation from the plant," the complaint said.

"The central government delayed giving evacuation orders and even when they were issued, the areas under evacuation orders were inappropriate."

Idogawa, 69, said the excessive radiation he was exposed to caused him to become stressed over health concerns.

His written complaint pointed out the central government failed to issue evacuation orders to the town appropriately following the March 2011 triple meltdown at the Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant.

Idogawa also lambasted the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co., the plant operator, for their reluctance to take necessary measures to protect against future tsunami disasters.

"The government and TEPCO bear responsibility for neglecting to implement advance countermeasures against potential tsunami, even though they recognized such need," the complaint said.

Four years after the disaster, evacuation orders are still in place for Futaba town, which co-hosts the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant. Most areas are designated as "difficult-to-return" zones because annual accumulated radiation levels exceed 50 millisieverts.

During a news conference in Tokyo on May 20, Idogawa said: "We could not protect the town residents because we believed in the words the government and TEPCO said that the nuclear accident would never happen. I hope I can guide those suffering from concerns over radiation exposure."

NRA's decision ignores residents' concerns

May 20, 2015

Protesters rally against Ikata plant draft

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

May 20, 2015 - Updated 10:34 UTC+2

Protesters have rallied against an effective approval of safety measures for the Ikata nuclear plant in western Japan by the country's nuclear regulator.

About 20 people gathered in front of the office of the Nuclear Regulation Authority on Wednesday as it approved a draft assessment of the plant's No.3 reactor.

The protesters chanted that Japan has enough electricity without nuclear power. They held banners expressing opposition to a restart.

They also handed to an agency official a letter calling on the regulator to withdraw its approval.

Civic group representative Makoto Yanagida said **it's regrettable that the NRA decision does not address local residents' concerns and questions.**

Nationwide network of plaintiffs over disaster

May 26, 2015

Plaintiffs suing over Fukushima nuclear disaster form nationwide network

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201505260003>

By MASAKAZU HONDA/ Staff Writer

NIHONMATSU, Fukushima Prefecture--Ten groups of plaintiffs in lawsuits and other legal actions over the Fukushima nuclear disaster have joined forces to demand compensation and accountability from the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co.

The groups held a liaison conference, called Hidanren (coalition of nuclear accident victims), to mark its establishment in Nihonmatsu, Fukushima Prefecture, on May 24. The network comprises 20,000 people. Ruiko Muto, who heads a group pursuing criminal responsibility of TEPCO and government officials, expressed frustration over the developments since the nation's worst nuclear accident unfolded in March 2011 at TEPCO's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

She called on the groups to work together to press their demands.

"So far, no one has been charged with criminal responsibility," Muto said. "Few (of the affected) are receiving compensation that they agree with, and few have a clear vision of how to rebuild their lives."

She also said evacuees are under growing pressure to return to their homes soon amid a government campaign to label their hometowns as safe.

The goals set by the conference include: having authorities and TEPCO offer an apology and full compensation to the victims; restore the victims' livelihoods and lifestyles; provide medical service coverage; and introduce measures to reduce radiation exposure among residents.

The participants of the conference included a group of plaintiffs from Fukushima Prefecture who fled to Tokyo, Kanagawa, Kyoto and Okayama and other prefectures after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami caused the nuclear disaster. They are demanding compensation.

Also present were plaintiffs from Fukushima municipalities, including Minami-Soma, Kawamata, Iitate and Kawauchi, who are seeking compensation; a group preparing to file a lawsuit in connection with the nuclear disaster; and a group of plaintiffs calling for legal steps to deal with radiation exposure among children.

Toyohiro Akiyama, a former TV journalist and astronaut who was involved in organic farming in Tamura, Fukushima Prefecture, before the nuclear disaster, said little progress has been made in terms of phasing out nuclear power generation because of a lack of imagination on the part of the public.

"We should have a wholesale review of people's way of life in a metropolis," said Akiyama, 72, professor of agriculture at Kyoto University of Art & Design, who spoke as a supporter of the network.

He was alluding to the fact that the Fukushima plant was built to transmit electricity to the Tokyo metropolitan area.

Koizumi: Japan is "a country which should not have nuclear power"

June 5, 2015

Koizumi condemns Abe's policy of continuing use of nuclear power

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/05/national/politics-diplomacy/koizumi-condemns-abes-policy-continuing-use-nuclear-power/#.VXF25Ebwmot>

Kyodo

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who has become a resolute anti-nuclear campaigner following the 2011 Fukushima No. 1 meltdowns, criticized on Thursday the government's plan to continue using nuclear power, saying it is "in breach of the election pledge" to lower reliance on nuclear power generation.

The government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who sees Koizumi as a political mentor, plans for nuclear power to account for 20 percent to 22 percent of Japan's total electricity output in 2030, compared with around 30 percent before the world's worst nuclear crisis since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Speaking at a press conference in Kagoshima Prefecture, Koizumi said the prime minister is "moving against the direction of lowering reliance on nuclear power as much as possible" as pledged by Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party during campaigning for the lower house election last year.

"Has he already forgotten what he said during the election?" asked Koizumi.

The former prime minister also criticized the government's plan to reactivate Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai nuclear plant located in Kagoshima as early as this summer. The complex is expected to become the first nuclear facility to be restarted under a new set of tighter safety regulations introduced after the Fukushima crisis started.

Koizumi said Japan could "go without nuclear power" if Abe made up his mind to do so, urging him to reconsider the resumption plan. It is one of the very rare occasions "when a prime minister can play a historic role," Koizumi said.

Referring to the recent volcanic eruption on a small, remote island in Kagoshima that forced all of the residents to evacuate, Koizumi added Japan is a "country which should not have nuclear power" given Japan is prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes and eruptions.

Preserve the pro-nuke signs?

June 8, 2015

Petitioners push to have pro-nuclear signs in evacuated town kept in place

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150608p2a00m0na011000c.html>



A pro-nuclear power sign reading "Nuclear power -- energy for a bright future," is seen in Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, in February 2014. (Mainichi)

IWAKI, Fukushima -- A man whose slogan was adopted many years ago for a pro-nuclear sign in Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, delivered a petition on June 8 signed by 6,502 people to have the signboard and others like it kept in place.

The signboards were put in place as part of a campaign to boost enthusiasm for the expansion of reactors at Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Yuji Onuma, now 39, was a sixth-grader at the time. His phrase, "Nuclear power -- energy for a bright future" was chosen in a public contest for the phrases and used on a sign, put up in 1988 along a national road. Three years later, another sign was put up in front of the town office. Each sign carried slogans on its front and back, for a total of four phrases espousing nuclear energy. The town of Futaba is almost completely off-limits for habitation due to the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant. With town employees unable to perform maintenance on the signs, their metal parts have corroded and the town government was planning to remove them due to the danger of them falling.

Onuma and his wife began collecting signatures for the petition to keep the signs in place, getting signatures from people at anti-nuclear demonstrations around the country and even from abroad. They say that former Prime Minister Naoto Kan even signed the petition. Another supporter was a 90-year-old man who came up with one slogan carried on the sign in front of the town office, reading, "Nuclear energy -- a prosperous future and hometown development."

In March this year, the town assembly approved a budget draft to remove the signboards, after which their preservation would be considered. However, Futaba Mayor Shiro Izawa, after receiving the petition, indicated he would rethink the decision to remove the signs.

"I want to make an overall decision on whether the signs should be preserved in place or removed," he said.

Onuma says, "As an issue for all of Japan, we should leave those signs to show the mistakes of the past to the people of the future."

see also :
June 9, 2015

Slogan writer seeks to keep Fukushima pro-nuclear signboard in place

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/09/national/social-issues/slogan-writer-seeks-keep-fukushima-pro-nuclear-signboard-place/#.VXcUdUbwmos>

JJI

IWAKI, FUKUSHIMA PREF. – The man who as a young student coined a rosy slogan promoting nuclear energy in Fukushima Prefecture that was splashed on a prominent signboard near the Fukushima No. 1 power plant has submitted some 6,500 signatures to the local government to keep it in place.[...]

Matashichi Oishi: No difference between nuclear weapons and nuke plants

June 10, 2015

H-bomb test survivor on nuke-free crusade

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/06/10/national/h-bomb-test-survivor-nuke-free-crusade/#.VXnV5Ebwmos>

by Tomonori Koike

Kyodo

Matashichi Oishi, a victim of the 1954 U.S. hydrogen bomb test on Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, has been crusading for a world free of atomic weapons and nuclear power plants.

But far from being driven by merely a hatred of nuclear weapons, Oishi's motivation is also his "grudge" against what he sees as an injustice by the Japanese government over the controversial tests.

Oishi, 81, was just 20 when he and 22 other tuna fisherman on the Fukuryu Maru No. 5 (known as the Lucky Dragon) encountered a cloud of "death ashes" following an H-bomb test in the Pacific Ocean on March 1, 1954.

The 15-megaton explosion was equivalent to around 1,000 Hiroshima-size bombs.

"A flash of light hit us in the cabin, and I felt earthquake-like vibrations," Oishi recalled during an interview at a mini-museum in Yumenoshima Park in Tokyo's Koto Ward, where the 29-meter-long vessel is now housed.

After returning to the port of Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, two weeks later, the crew were treated in Tokyo for burns, nausea and other health problems.

One crew member died six months later, while Oishi and the other surviving crew members were discharged in May 1955.

Over the years, many of his fellow crew members have developed liver dysfunction and other diseases, and 16 of them have passed away. Oishi has been affected by liver cancer and a cerebral hemorrhage.

Although the incident is viewed as the third atomic bombing disaster after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the ship's crew has not qualified for medical care benefits under a law intended to support atomic-bombing survivors.

Several months before their release from hospital, the incident was “politically settled” with a consolation payment from the U.S.

“The government is treating us in this way because they think little of fishermen,” Oishi said.

After feeling like a pariah in his hometown when he returned from hospital, Oishi relocated to Tokyo where he would run a laundry shop for 50 years until 2010.

Since then Oishi has become a torch bearer for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In 2010, he visited New York to attend an international conference on the prevention of the spread of nuclear weapons, while in March last year he went to the Marshall Islands to attend a memorial service for Bikini H-bomb test victims.

Amid U.S.-Soviet nuclear rivalry, Washington carried out 67 nuclear detonations in the area from 1946 — less than a year after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — to 1958.

Speaking of Oishi's dogged efforts, his eldest daughter Yoshiko Tanaka said: “A desire to send a message to as many people as possible is supporting him.”

When the Fukushima nuclear calamity started in March 2011, it came as a personal shock to Oishi because of his own experience of radiation exposure and an association he sees between the Bikini H-bomb test and Japan's nuclear development.

The U.S. test took place at a time when Japan was starting to introduce nuclear power for electricity using enriched uranium provided by the U.S.

When it comes to the threat of devastation, Oishi argues, there is no difference between nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants.

“Although Bikini was a warning against that threat, it was ignored,” he said, condemning the Japanese government's promotion of nuclear power.

At a protest rally held in Yaizu on March 1, Oishi reiterated his concern over the safety of nuclear plants.

“Unless the responsibility for the (Fukushima) nuclear accident is pursued and punishment is given, the same thing will happen again,” he said.

Keeping Futaba pro-nuke signboards (follow-up)

June 15, 2015

6,500 sign up to save pro-nuclear signs as negative legacy of Fukushima disaster

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201506150068>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

FUTABA, Fukushima Prefecture--A group has submitted a petition with more than 6,500 signatures to preserve two signboards extolling the future of nuclear power here as a testament to the myth of nuclear safety before the 2011 disaster.

Led by Yuji Onuma, 39, the group submitted the petition to the government and the assembly of Futaba, a town that co-hosts the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, on June 8. All town residents have been evacuated.

After receiving the petition, Futaba Mayor Shiro Izawa said, "We will take your request into account, give it serious consideration, and make a decision from a broad perspective."

Onuma is the author of one of the four slogans on the signboards, which were chosen out of numerous submissions made by the public in 1988 as part of a government initiative to promote nuclear energy. The slogan penned by Onuma says "Genshiryoku--Akarui Mirai no Energy" (Nuclear power is the energy of a bright future).

"Some people may feel uncomfortable every time they see the signboards. Others have asked whether preserving them has a meaning," said Onuma. "But it is not necessary to remove them in a hurry. We should keep them and discuss the issue."

Onuma is evacuating in Koga, Ibaraki Prefecture. He has installed solar panels on plots of land he has purchased in the municipalities of Sakura and Nasu-Karasuyama, both in Tochigi Prefecture, to create a life free of reliance on nuclear power.

Another slogan was written by Yoshio Takeuchi, 89, who also signed the petition. It says, "Genshiryoku--Kyodo no Hatten Yutakana Mirai" (Nuclear power will bring hometown development and an affluent future).

The authors of the other two slogans have passed away.

Other signatories to the petition include former Prime Minister Naoto Kan, former Fukushima Governor Eisaku Sato and actress Midori Kiuchi.

One of the signs is installed in front of the municipal gymnasium, which includes Onuma's slogan. The one that contains Takeuchi's slogan stands at the entrance of the town government building.

The group began its signature-collecting campaign on March 18 immediately after the Futaba town government announced plans to remove the signboards out of fears they could collapse.

It had collected 6,502 signatures by the end of May, including 2,682 from the Internet. The signatories come from a wide range of locations, from Hokkaido to Okinawa Prefecture. There are also signatures from people living in 12 other countries, including the United States.

"Things may have been different when our town was heavily dependent on the nuclear power plant, but are there still people who say that nuclear power is necessary under the current circumstances?" said Takeuchi, who is evacuating in Utsunomiya, Tochigi Prefecture. "We should preserve the signboards and use them to reflect on (our past)."

When the town government was collecting the slogans in 1988, Takeuchi had already taken early retirement from the post office and was enjoying his hobbies. He came up with the slogan in cooperation with his wife, Toshiko, now 85.

Both Takeuchi and his wife experienced the horrors of World War II, including air raids. However, they said their lives as evacuees following the March 2011 nuclear accident have been more difficult. They said that nuclear power plants should be abolished not only in Futaba but also throughout Japan, and that the two signboards are vital for that purpose.

(This article was written by Masakazu Honda and Takuro Negishi.)

Pro-nuke signs will be preserved

June 18, 2015

Fukushima town decides to preserve pro-nuclear signs as negative legacy

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201506180068>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

IWAKI, Fukushima Prefecture--The government of what became a ghost town in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster has decided to preserve signboards featuring slogans boasting a bright future from nuclear energy.

The decision, announced by Futaba Mayor Shiro Izawa at the town assembly operating in Iwaki on June 17, followed a campaign to keep the two pro-nuclear signboards in Futaba as a negative legacy of nuclear energy.

One sign over the main street of the town reads, "Genshiryoku--Akarui Mirai no Energy" (Nuclear power is the energy of a bright future).

The town government received a petition with 6,502 signatures calling for preservation of the signboards. The petition was led by Yuji Onuma, who came up with the slogan in 1988, when he was a sixth-grader at Futaba Kita elementary school.

His homework project received an award, and the slogan became a fixture on the signboard that welcomes visitors to the center of the town.

Futaba was completely evacuated after the disaster started at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011. The plant straddles Futaba and Okuma.

Evacuees are still unable to return to their homes.

The Futaba government initially planned to remove the signboards but decided they were worth saving as a testament to the pre-disaster myth of nuclear safety.

The town is considering exhibiting the signs to the public.

Antinuclear shareholders voted down

June 26, 2015

Shareholders of 9 utilities reject proposals to abolish nuclear reactors

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201506260071>

June 26, 2015

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Shareholders of the nation's nine regional utilities with nuclear power plants rejected calls for a nuclear-free Japan at their annual meetings on June 25, while management reaffirmed plans to restart the reactors as soon as possible.

This year, as in 2014, some shareholders demanded the companies abolish their nuclear facilities, but all those proposals were dismissed.

Nuclear plant operators across Japan are seeking to restart their reactors, which have been taken off-line for safety inspections due to the Fukushima nuclear crisis triggered by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

The administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has insisted that Japan needs to maintain its dependence on nuclear power for a portion of the nation's energy needs.

At the June 25 shareholders' meeting of Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, a group of 400 shareholders, named the Nuclear Phase-out TEPCO Shareholders' Movement, called on the utility to include "a plan to withdraw from nuclear power" in its articles of incorporation.

"TEPCO failed to prevent the nuclear accident," said Katsutaka Idogawa, a member of the group who was serving as the mayor of Futaba in Fukushima Prefecture when the nuclear disaster unfurled. "It should give up operating reactors because they are not safe."

Even after his allotted three minutes for speaking ran out, Idogawa continued, "When can we return to our homes? We cannot wait any longer."

Meanwhile, the Osaka and Kyoto municipal governments, which hold shares in Kansai Electric Power Co., proposed that the utility abolish its reactors.

"The Japanese people hope to realize a society independent from nuclear power," Kyoto Mayor Daisaku Kadokawa said at the meeting.

But the proposal was voted down by shareholders.

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto was not in attendance, although he delivered a speech that lasted nearly 10 minutes at last year's general meeting.

June 25, 2015

Some shareholders urge utilities to end nuclear power generation

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150625p2g00m0bu066000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Antinuclear shareholders on Thursday urged major power companies to end nuclear power generation as Japan nears restarting nuclear reactors that have remained idled amid safety concerns following the 2011 Fukushima crisis.

But nine utilities including Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi complex, voted down all antinuclear proposals at their general shareholders' meetings, with company officials expressing eagerness to reactivate nuclear plants as soon as possible to improve their business conditions hurt by the halt of all nuclear reactors in the country.

The shareholders' meetings were held at a time when a nuclear plant in southwestern Japan is expected to be the first to go back online, possibly this summer, under tighter post-Fukushima safety requirements. At TEPCO's meeting, Katsutaka Idogawa, former mayor of Futaba town in Fukushima Prefecture -- currently uninhabitable due to radiation contamination -- said pulling out of nuclear power is "the only way for the company to survive."

TEPCO has "forced people who were living peacefully into a situation like hell...I propose TEPCO break away from nuclear power," he said.

But TEPCO President Naomi Hirose told the shareholders that he believes nuclear power generation is "very important" for a stable supply of electricity and for lower prices.

Some TEPCO shareholders also called for putting a priority on promoting renewable energy such as solar and wind, but the company opposed the motion.

The Japanese utilities' eagerness to revive nuclear power is in line with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's plan to reactivate reactors that have met the new safety regulations compiled after the Fukushima accident.

In stark contrast, **the majority of the public remains opposed to nuclear power** following the Fukushima triple-reactor meltdowns.

Some shareholders of Kyushu Electric Power Co., which hopes to restart its Sendai nuclear plant in August, proposed that the company president be dismissed, saying his stance of continuing the use of nuclear power has caused its earnings to deteriorate. The motion was later voted down.

President Michiaki Uriu told the meeting that the utility "aims to restart nuclear reactors as soon as possible on the premise that securing safety is the priority."

The city of Osaka, the largest stockholder of Kansai Electric Power Co., proposed a business reform plan toward ending reliance on nuclear power generation, but it was also turned down.

Kansai Electric President Makoto Yagi pledged to do his "utmost to restart nuclear plants whose safety have been confirmed," including its Takahama reactors in western Japan that have cleared the regulator's safety screening.

The Japanese government plans to make nuclear energy account for 20 percent to 22 percent of the country's total electricity supply in 2030, compared with around 30 percent before the world's worst nuclear accident since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

June 25, 2015(Mainichi Japan)

Fukushima: No to burying of nuke waste

July 2, 2015

Fukushima rejects briefing for nuclear waste site

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Jul. 2, 2015 - Updated 22:08 UTC+2

Japan's industry ministry is holding briefing sessions across the country. It's struggling to secure disposal sites for high-level radioactive waste generated by nuclear plants.

But it will skip the session in Fukushima Prefecture, at least for now, due to strong opposition there.

The government plans to bury high-level radioactive waste at a depth of 300 meters or more in final disposal facilities. But the effort to solicit candidate sites has made no progress because of strong safety concerns among municipalities.

In May, the industry ministry decided to name appropriate candidate sites instead of waiting for municipalities to voluntarily apply.

Since then, it has been holding briefing sessions in 39 prefectures over how to process the highly radioactive waste and how it will select appropriate sites, to deepen understanding of the facilities.

But officials in Fukushima Prefecture rejected the ministry's request to hold such a session. They cited the burden of the on-going scrapping of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

They also referred to building of intermediate storage facilities in the prefecture for contaminated soil and other materials from cleaning-up work in Fukushima.

Loading at Sendai soon to start - Protests

July 7, 2015

Operator to load nuclear fuel into reactor for planned 1st restart



Protesters demonstrate against reactivation of the Sendai nuclear power plant's No. 1 reactor in front of the plant's front gate in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, on July 7, 2015. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150707p2g00m0dm018000c.html>

FUKUOKA (Kyodo) -- Kyushu Electric Power Co. will start loading nuclear fuel into a reactor at its Sendai complex Tuesday ahead of its restart planned in mid-August under more rigorous safety requirements adopted after the 2011 Fukushima triple-reactor meltdowns.

The reboot of the reactor will mark the revival of Japan's nuclear power generation that has been idled amid safety concern following the world's worst nuclear disaster since the 1986 Chernobyl accident. None of Japan's commercial reactors have been online for nearly two years.

The government and utilities, faced with higher imported fuel costs, have sought to reactivate nuclear reactors that have met the new safety standards. The majority of the public, however, opposes the restart amid persistent safety concern and the ongoing work for decommissioning the radiation-leaking Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

According to a Kyushu Electric official, the operator will insert a total of 157 fuel rod assemblies into the Sendai No. 1 reactor, which will take about four days. Following the Nuclear Regulation Authority's screening of equipment, the utility plans to reactivate the unit and begin generating electricity in mid-August.

All of Japan's commercial nuclear reactors had been shut down by May 2012 due to heightened concern over the use of atomic power in the wake of the Fukushima disaster triggered by a huge earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

Two reactors owned by Kansai Electric Power Co. were reactivated in July 2012 to address possible power shortages but they entered a period of mandatory routine checkups in September 2013, leaving Japan without nuclear power supply again.

In September 2014, the No. 1 unit at the Sendai plant, located in southwestern Japan, became the first nuclear facility to obtain a safety clearance from the regulator based on the post-Fukushima safety standards, a process necessary for any reactor before being allowed to go back online.

Kyushu Electric also plans to bring the Sendai No. 2 reactor back online in October. Two other reactors at Kansai Electric's Takahama plant have also obtained the regulator's safety clearance, but the outlook for their restart is uncertain due to a recent court decision to ban the utility from bringing them back online.

In its long-term energy policy, the government has pledged to continue utilizing nuclear power as a key source of electricity. It seeks to have nuclear power account for 20 percent to 22 percent of the total electricity supply in 2030, compared with around 30 percent before the nuclear crisis.

July 07, 2015 (Mainichi Japan)

July 6, 2015

Loading fuel at Sendai power plant soon to start

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150707_01.html

Jul. 6, 2015 - Updated 19:08 UTC+2

The operator of the Sendai nuclear power plant in southwestern Japan plans to start loading fuel into one of the reactors on Tuesday in preparation for restarting it.

The Kyushu Electric Power Company has scheduled 4 days for the work of placing 157 nuclear fuel assemblies into the Number 1 reactor. Workers will use a crane to transfer the fuel rods one by one from a storage pool in an adjacent building.

The utility says it will rotate workers so it can conduct the work around the clock. It also says safety is the highest priority.

Kyushu Electric halted the operation of the Number 1 reactor 2 months after the 2011 disaster in northeastern Japan. All of its fuel was removed by the end of January 2013.

The company plans to restart the reactor in mid-August. In the meantime, emergency equipment that injects coolant into the reactor and other facilities crucial to safety will be checked.

Workers will also take part in a drill on how to respond to a severe accident.

Last year, the plant became the first to have safety measures approved under new regulations for nuclear plants introduced after the 2011 Fukushima accident.

Equipment at the plant's 2 reactors is now being checked ahead of the restart.

Protests at Sendai plant

July 7, 2015

Protesters rally at Sendai nuclear plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150707_16.html

Jul. 7, 2015 - Updated 05:08 UTC+2

Protesters have rallied outside the Sendai nuclear power plant in southwestern Japan, as workers began loading fuel into a reactor.

About 100 protesters, including local residents and anti-nuclear activists in and outside Kagoshima Prefecture, gathered outside the Sendai plant on Tuesday.

The plant's operator halted the operation of No.1 reactor after the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in 2011. The utility plans to restart the reactor in mid-August.

Among the protesters was Ryoko Torihara, who heads an anti-nuclear power group. Torihara said what happened in Fukushima could also happen at the Sendai plant.

She stressed that reactors at the Sendai plant should never be restarted for the sake of future generations.

One of the participants read out a statement expressing deep anger at Kyushu Electric Power Company, which operates the Sendai plant.

The protesters criticized the utility for its hardened attitude. They accuse it of ignoring the public's desire for a society free from nuclear power generation.

Standing at the front gate, where more than 20 guards were positioned, they shouted that the company should listen to the voices of local people.

Mixed feelings in Sendai

July 8, 2015

Local reaction mixed to fuel loading, imminent restart at Sendai nuclear plant



Protesters hold up light-up message boards in front of the Tokyo office of Kyushu Electric Power Co. in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on the evening of July 7, 2015. (Mainichi)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150708p2a00m0na013000c.html>

SATSUMASENDAI, Kagoshima -- Kyushu Electric Power Co. started work to load nuclear fuel into the No. 1 reactor at the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant on July 7, sparking mixed reactions among local residents. If the reactor restart at the Sendai plant goes ahead as planned, it will be the first such reactivation under stricter safety requirements adopted after the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant meltdowns in March 2011.

About 120 people including local residents gathered in front of the main gate of the Sendai nuclear power complex on the morning of July 7. Holding banners which read, "Loading of nuclear fuel is a step toward accidents," they shouted, "We will never condone reactivation," and, "Kyushu Electric should abandon nuclear reactors."

Kiyoaki Kawabata, 59, who heads a local self-governing body in the Kagoshima Prefecture city of Satumasendai, was angry that Kyushu Electric had moved ahead with fuel loading without holding a briefing session for local residents.

"Even though residents have been seeking an explanation, they ignored us. We cannot forgive them for that," he said. Hiroshi Sugihara, a 67-year-old part-time lecturer at Kagoshima University, commented, "They should stop work and abandon their (reactor) restart plans."

Seven people from Minamata, Kagoshima Prefecture, about 45 kilometers from the Sendai nuclear station, joined the rally. Takafumi Nagano, the 60-year-old head of a group calling for sound nuclear evacuation plans, said, "We must not allow for the beginning of a new nuclear era." In the 1970s, Nagano lived in what was then Sendai city and joined a campaign opposing construction of the Sendai plant.

Hiroyoshi Yamamoto, who heads a pro-nuclear group in Satumasendai and the Sendai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "Although the local economy remains in bad shape, I hope that, with the fuel loading, the imminent nuclear plant restart will activate the local economy and stabilize business performance."

Kagoshima Gov. Yuichiro Ito said in a statement, "Because inspections will continue to be carried out before the nuclear plant is put back on line, I would ask Kyushu Electric to continue to place top priority on ensuring safety and take all appropriate measures."

About 200 people opposed to the Sendai restart gathered in front of Kyushu Electric's branch office in the Yurakucho district of Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on the evening of July 7. The rally was organized by the "Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes."

Holding banners, some of which said: "Don't put in nuclear fuel!" and, "Don't press the start button," the demonstrators chanted slogans including "People can't evacuate!" for about 90 minutes. Protester Yoshimitsu Umezawa, a 62-year-old caregiver from the Tokyo city of Machida, said, "We can't forgive a reactivation which puts priority on the economy and ignores people's lives."

[Click here for Japanese article](#)

July 08, 2015 (Mainichi Japan)

July 7, 2015

Naraha residents can return home Sept. 5 in lifting of evacuation order

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201507070089>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

NARAHARA, Fukushima Prefecture--The people of Naraha, a town that was evacuated after the disaster at the nearby Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, will be allowed to return home Sept. 5, the government said.

It will be the first among seven municipalities to have an evacuation order for all residents lifted since the meltdowns at the plant in March 2011.

The central government notified Naraha officials July 6 that it had fixed the date. Mayor Yukiei Matsumoto accepted the plan, saying the town will help residents resettle.

The removal of the evacuation order is aimed at “accelerating the town’s recovery” from the nuclear disaster, said Yosuke Takagi, state minister of economy, trade and industry, during a meeting with Matsumoto.

Takagi, who heads the on-site headquarters of the nuclear disaster response task force, said the government believes that radioactive contamination in the town is “not dangerous enough to continue forcing evacuation on residents who want to return home.”

He also pointed out that prolonged evacuation will have a negative impact on residents’ health and will deprive the town of recovery opportunities if private businesses are prevented from starting up in the area.

The lifting of the evacuation order for Nahara will be the first case among the seven municipalities in which almost all the residents as well as municipal governments were forced to evacuate.

The majority of the town’s 7,400 residents currently live in temporary housing and publicly subsidized apartments in other parts of Fukushima Prefecture or elsewhere. They will be allowed to return home permanently once the evacuation order is removed.

Even after the evacuation order is lifted, residents can remain living in the temporary shelters and other dwellings where they currently reside rent-free until March 2017.

Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the crippled plant, has also pledged to continue paying compensation to all residents until at least March 2018.

On June 17, Takagi had proposed lifting the evacuation order before the Bon holiday period in mid-August, but this plan was opposed by local officials and residents who argued that not enough had been done to restore the town’s environment.

The central government pushed back the date to Sept. 5, assessing the government's efforts have met three criteria necessary to lift the evacuation order: lower airborne radiation, improved infrastructure and administrative services, and a sufficient consultation period for residents and the local authority to discuss the situation with central government officials.

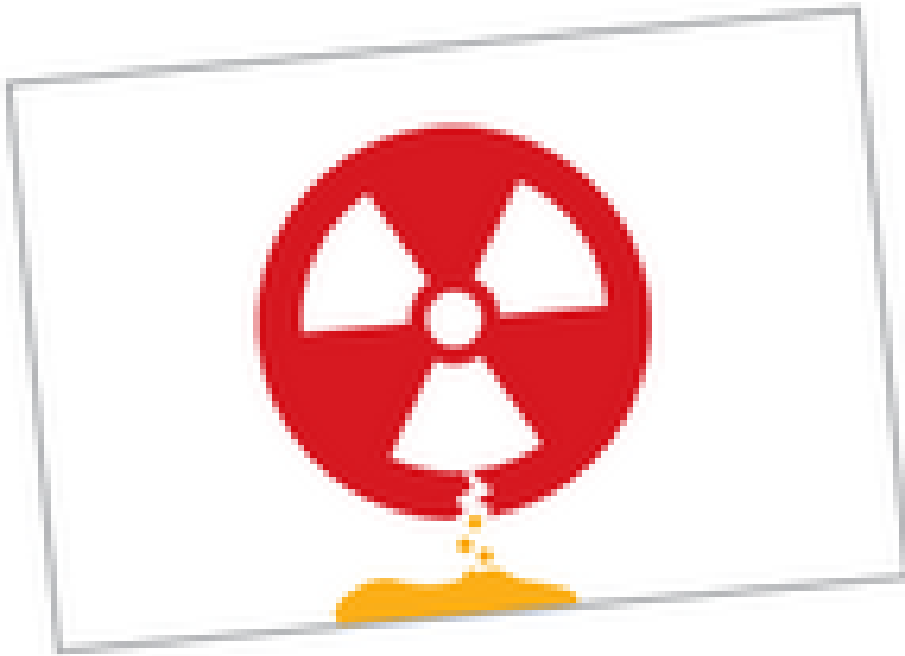
(This article was written by Takuro Negishi and Akifumi Nagahashi.)

Please sign petition

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/japan/>

Sign petition demanding TEPCO stop dumping radioactivity into the Pacific Ocean!

July 8, 2015



Our friends at Green Action Japan have asked us to urge our supporters to consider signing a Change.Org petition demanding that the Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Company cease and desist from discharging hazardous radioactivity from the destroyed Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean. For updates on the ongoing Fukushima nuclear catastrophe, and to learn more about the Japanese environmental movement's struggle to block atomic reactor restarts, be sure to visit Beyond Nuclear's Japan website section!

Please sign the petition (2)

Stop Radioactive Contamination of the Pacific Ocean from the Fukushima nuclear power plant site!

Phase-Out Nuclear Energy Fukushima Network

We are citizens who want to stop releasing any more radioactively contaminated water into the ocean from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident site.

We ask your cooperation for this petition so that Tokyo Electric, the Japanese government, and the Nuclear Regulation Authority will responsibly implement measures to deal with the Fukushima accident and these radioactive discharges into the Pacific Ocean.

The ocean is the source for all life. Help us stop radioactive contamination of the Pacific Ocean!

It has now been more than four years since the start of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident on March 11th 2011.

The crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi site continues with no end in sight. However, the Japanese government is focusing much of its efforts on the restart of nuclear plants in Japan. Given the scale of the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant, it should instead prioritize all its efforts to reduce the risks to the environment and public health from the Fukushima plant.

Two years ago Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared that the situation at the Fukushima nuclear site was “under control” when he was trying to secure Japan as the host for the 2020 Olympics. That was not true then and it is not true today. The Japanese government and Tepco must make all efforts to reduce the environmental threats from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident.

From March 11, 2011, there has been a continuous release of massive quantities of radioactive contamination not only into the air but also into the ocean. Tepco, the Japanese government, and the Nuclear Regulation Authority have continuously failed to undertake effective countermeasures to deal with liquid radioactive discharges. Moreover, they are now pushing forward plans to deliberately release these contaminated “processed” discharges into the environment, including the Pacific Ocean.

Tepco and the Japanese government have also neglected monitoring releases of contaminated water into the ocean, and, it was disclosed earlier this year that Tepco had withheld disclosing the fact that radioactive releases into the ocean had been taking place over the past years

It is unacceptable to the people of Japan that radioactive contamination is continuing in our oceans.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe must meet his Tokyo Olympic commitments and get the Fukushima accident site under control.

Petition

- 1. We petition Tepco to put a stop to radioactive water emissions to the outside of the bay from the contaminated trenches at the site, and stop the controlled releases of contaminated water into the ocean including from the groundwater pump-up by subdrain, groundwater drain, and tanks containing contaminated water (including water that has been “processed”).**
- 2. We petition the Nuclear Regulatory Authority to instruct Tepco to implement the above.**
- 3. We petition Tepco and the Japanese government to go back to the drawing boards and undertake a fundamental reassessment of measures to address the radioactive water contamination at the Fukushima Daiichi site including the issues of the “ice wall” and water containing tritium. It must select a plan that can be implemented and is safe.**
- 4. We petition the Japanese government to promptly disclose all information not just in Japanese but in multiple languages related to radioactive water contamination due to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident.**
- 5. We petition Japan’s Nuclear Regulation Authority to declare a moratorium on its review of electric utility applications to restart nuclear power reactors, and, give top priority to undertaking measures to address the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident.**

More information:

Radioactive discharges into the ocean have been continuous since the Fukushima accident:

In February 2015, it was revealed that heavily contaminated water had been entering the ocean from the trenches at the Fukushima site. Tepco had been monitoring these releases since April the year before and knew what was going on, but did not make it public. The Nuclear Regulation Authority had neglected to take action. Contaminated water from Unit 2's large object carry-in facility roof-top is suspected as the source of the contamination. Investigating the problem, however, is made difficult due to the very high levels of radiation around the reactor buildings, and thus the source of the contamination has not been identified. Radiation from the trenches has been entering the ocean since the start of the accident. It is a matter of urgency to prevent further releases.

Radioactively contaminated water increases daily:

Currently, Tepco pours approximately 320 tons of water daily into units 1, 2 and 3 reactor cores in order to cool the damaged nuclear fuel. The water, which become heavily contaminated, leaks out the bottom of the damaged reactor buildings where it then mixes with the approximately 300 tons of ground water that daily enters the reactor buildings from the cracked walls, etc. Tepco extracts just the cesium and salts from these heavily contaminated waters. About 320 tons is then returned to the cores each day to cool the damaged nuclear fuel. The remaining 300 tons is pumped into tanks set up above ground at the plant site.

The underground by-pass, sub-drain, and underground drain----discharging this pumped up water into the ocean:

Since May of 2014, Tepco's method of dealing with the continuous increase in contaminated water has been to pump the ground water from the 12 wells (underground by-pass) the company had created on the mountain side of the site (as opposed to the sea side), and releasing this water into the ocean. As of February 2015, this water totaled 83,740 tons (pumped up a total of 52 times), and contained a total of 15.2 billion becquerels of tritium. Tepco is also pushing to mobilize those locally engaged in fisheries to take part in the plans for releasing ground water discharge from the wells (43 sub-drains) in the vicinity of the reactor buildings and the wells on the ocean side of the site (the ground water drains). All this underground water is tritium-contaminated. Tepco, however, states that there is no problem with this release since it has set 1,500 becquerels per liter as the goal of the operational limit, and this is lower than the 60,000 becquerels per liter limit set by the national government. However, since there is absolutely no limit to the total amount of radiation that can be released, in actuality it amounts to no limitation on the quantity of radioactive materials that could be discharged into the ocean.

"Treated" water is also contaminated! 1000 trillion becquerels of tritium are in the tanks:

Tepco is using ALPS (the Multi-nuclide Removal System called the Advanced Liquid Processing System) as the countermeasure for getting the radioactivity out of the water which has been contaminated with very high levels of radiation. However, this equipment cannot remove the tritium of which there is several million becquerels per liter. The water that has gone through this equipment is called "processed water" by Tepco. However, this water should be considered contaminated water. The total amount of tritium contained in the tanks on site amounts to 1,000 trillion becquerels. This is 600 years worth of tritium that had been released to date at the Fukushima site. When considering the already massive quantities of other radionuclides that have been released inside and outside the bay at the Fukushima site besides tritium, no additional radiation should be released from the Fukushima site.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) has abdicated its regulatory responsibilities---the NRA has not gained the understanding of the Fukushima people:

On January 2015, the Nuclear Regulation Authority decided its policy of discharging the "processed water", the liquid that had been processed through the ALPS, etc., into the ocean. The fact a regulatory body would issue a policy which would defend the failures of Tepco's contaminated-water

countermeasures is equivalent to the regulatory relinquishing its regulatory duties. The National Federation of Fisheries Co-operative Associations publicly issued an executive statement that this decision by the Nuclear Regulation Authority was “exceedingly regrettable” and stated it “strongly petitions that contaminated discharges into the ocean which could not obtain the understanding of those engaged in fisheries and the national citizenry should absolutely not be undertaken.”

Stop the discharge and deliberate release into the ocean of radioactively contaminated water:

The Japanese government should, instead of working to restart nuclear power in Japan, prioritize all its efforts on getting the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident under control. Tepco and the Japanese government should immediately create a plan to stop the radioactive discharges into the ocean and implement that plan in order to reduce the risks to the environment and public health from the Fukushima plant.

Stop Radioactive Discharges into the Ocean Campaign

Organized by: Phase-Out Nuclear Energy Fukushima Network, Hairo Action Fukushima, Citizens’ Nuclear Information Center, The Nuclear Regulation Authority Citizen Watchdog Group, Osaka Citizens Against the Mihama, Ohi and Takahama Nuclear Power Plants (Mihama-no-Kai), Green Action (Japan)

Blog (in Japanese): <http://stoposensui15.blogspot.com> (The Japanese petition can be downloaded from this site.) You can also sign the petition in Japanese from this site: <http://chn.ge/1Fpg9VK> and in German from this site: <https://goo.gl/ekz9zk>

Upcoming petition deadline: July 20, 2015

(The petition will continue after that date.)

The Fukushima fisheries union may be pressured into accepting some radioactive discharges into the Pacific Ocean from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. This may happen the end of July. It’s important for people around the world to tell Tepco and the Japanese government now that continuing radioactive discharges from the Fukushima plant are not acceptable. This will help support the unions to hold firm.

South Koreans and Japanese citizens should join forces against nukes

July 15, 2015

More residents joining lawsuits seeking damages from South Korean nuclear plants

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/korean_peninsula/AJ201507150007

By AKIRA NAKANO/ Staff Writer

GYEONGJU, South Korea--For three decades after a nuclear power plant near her home became operational, Hwang Bun-hui believed that nuclear power was no different from other energy sources in terms of safety and health effects.

But after the Fukushima nuclear disaster unfurled in Japan in March 2011, she came to harbor a growing concern over the effects that nuclear power generation has on human health as she had long suffered from a feeling of listlessness.

After a medical checkup, Hwang, 67, a resident of Gyeongju, was diagnosed with thyroid cancer and had to have immediate surgery to remove the tumor. Several other people from her village, which is the closest human settlement to the Wolsong nuclear power plant, were also diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

Hwang is among **an increasing number of South Koreans who live near the country's four nuclear power plants and are joining civil suits against the operator of the plants, demanding compensation for cancer and other adverse health effects.**

The citizen's legal actions were prompted by a landmark ruling by a district court last October, which ordered Korea Electric Power Corp., the government-owned operator of the nuclear plants, to pay 15 million won (1.68 million yen, or \$13,500) in damages to a thyroid cancer patient.

The number of plaintiffs seeking compensation from KEPCO for health damages incurred by radioactive emissions from the plants has now swelled to more than 2,500.

Hwang joined the lawsuit late last year, encouraged by the landmark ruling by the Busan District Court. In demanding compensation from KEPCO, she argues that radioactive emissions from the Wolsong nuclear power plant in Gyeongju, with its five reactors, have caused her thyroid cancer.

Hwang's residence is located just 915 meters from the nuclear plant. **The country's nuclear watchdog authorized the extension of the operational life of the plant's No. 1 reactor beyond 30 years in February.**

While seeking damages through a civil trial, Hwang has also joined a **local residents' protest to demand the immediate decommissioning of aging reactors at the plant.**

After she read the headlines of the landmark ruling in favor of the resident of Busan, Hwang realized that, "I'm equally a victim of a nuclear power plant."

The 48-year-old plaintiff lived at a site located 7.7 kilometers from the Kori nuclear power plant in Busan for about two decades, and had her thyroid cancer surgically removed three years ago.

Citing a judicial precedent set by the Supreme Court in a pollution case, **the Busan District Court held KEPCO responsible to pay damages unless it could prove that a nuclear power plant is safe for local residents.**

The ruling brought similar civil actions among residents who live near four nuclear power plants in South Korea.

Between December and April, 545 residents living near the nuclear plants, who have been diagnosed with thyroid cancer, joined lawsuits. Most of the plaintiffs live in areas within a 10-km radius from a nuclear power plant.

The total number of plaintiffs, including the family members of cancer patients, has already exceeded 2,500.

Lawyer Kim Yeong-hui, who has encouraged residents living near nuclear plants to join the litigation, said that **epidemiological surveys in South Korea have shown that residents living 5 to 30 km from nuclear power plants have 1.8 times a higher incidence of thyroid cancer than people from other areas.**

"The district court made the decision based on the survey results, and Japan should also conduct surveys covering residents living near all domestic reactors (to determine the health effect of nuclear energy)," the lawyer said.

At a gathering of anti-nuclear citizens in Osaka in January, Lee Jin-seop, the husband of the plaintiff who won the lawsuit at the Busan court, said that **citizens from the two countries and elsewhere need to join hands in legal efforts against nuclear power.**

“Even after the Fukushima disaster, South Korea has increased its number of nuclear reactors, while Japan is pushing for the restart of idled reactors,” said Lee, 51. “We need to expand the network of citizens seeking legal justice to protect our safety and health.”

Protests continue

July 25, 2015

Protest against Abe gov't security legislation, nuclear restarts held in front of Diet

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150725p2a00m0na001000c.html>

Demonstrators gathered in central Tokyo on July 24 to protest core policies of the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe administration -- security bills allowing Japan to exercise the right to collective self-defense, the special state secrets protection law, and the restart of nuclear reactors.

Protestors assembled at Hibiya Yagai Ongakudo, an open-air concert hall, and around the Diet building, shouting, "A prime minister should abide by the Constitution!"

People from a wide variety of age groups could be seen on the sidewalk in front of the Diet building. A member of Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy - s (SEALDs) spoke into a microphone, saying, "We have the power to change this policy course. We the people are the heroes of this country," prompting cheers from the crowd.

The same day, there were also people demonstrating in support of the security bills nearby. There were no major altercations between the groups.

Peace activists gather in Hiroshima

August 4, 2015

Hiroshima gears up for 70th A-bomb anniversary as peace campaigners gather

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/04/national/history/hiroshima-gears-70th-bomb-anniversary-peace-campaigners-gather/#.VcDrU_nwmos

Kyodo

HIROSHIMA – The Hiroshima Municipal Government said it expects representatives from a record 100 countries to attend its annual ceremony Thursday to mark the U.S. atomic bombing as peace activists continued to gather in the city.

The participants will include U.S. Ambassador Caroline Kennedy, who will be attending the event for the second year in a row after assuming her post in late 2013, and a senior U.S. State Department official in charge of arms control, according to the U.S. government.

Peace campaigners from around the world gathered to attend annual conferences organized by major Japanese anti-nuclear groups to push for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

At a conference convened Tuesday by the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, known as Gensuikyo, 90-year-old atomic bomb survivor Sunao Tsuboi stressed the need to join forces to eliminate nuclear weapons, recalling his painful memories and physical suffering after experiencing the blast from about 1.2 km away.

"Illnesses caused by the atomic bomb continue to haunt me," said Tsuboi, one of the chairpersons of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations.

He said he has been hospitalized a dozen times.

Muhammad Anshor, deputy permanent representative of Indonesia to the United Nations, said the horrific humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons witnessed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is "one of the main driving forces" behind Indonesia's support for a total ban on nuclear weapons.

"I hope the governments and civil society continue to work together in striving for a world without nuclear weapons," he said.

Young peace activists from overseas also joined the event, with Mary Popeo, a 23-year-old from Boston, expressing her eagerness to take back her experiences in Japan to encourage young people to act.

"A lot of people tell me . . . that because we're young maybe you can't make as much difference, and people say, 'You have no experience of war,' or 'You're not an expert in nuclear weapons so why are you doing this?' But you do not need to be an expert in nuclear weapons to see the humanitarian consequences," she said.

Another conference was held Tuesday by the Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs, commonly known as Gensuikin.

Both Gensuikyo and Gensuikin will be holding anti-nuclear gatherings and other events in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki through Sunday.

A-bomb survivors criticise nuclear power

August 5, 2015

A-bomb survivors speak out against nuclear power, decry Abe's view of war

by Linda Sieg

Reuters

FUKUSHIMA – When Atsushi Hoshino set out to revive a group representing atomic bomb survivors in the Fukushima Prefecture 30 years ago, one topic was taboo — criticizing the nuclear power industry upon which many relied for jobs.

That changed dramatically after March 11, 2011, when a massive tsunami devastated the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, triggering meltdowns, spewing radiation and forcing tens of thousands of residents to flee their homes.

"Until then . . . I felt somewhat uncomfortable about nuclear power, but not enough to oppose it. Rather, I was in a situation where it wasn't possible to oppose it," Hoshino, 87, told reporters at his home in the city

of Fukushima, about 60 km from the wrecked Fukushima No. 1 plant, the country's first commercial nuclear plant when it went online in 1971.

Now, Hoshino, a survivor of the Aug. 6, 1945, U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima, is among the majority of Japanese who oppose Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's plan to reboot reactors that were shut down after the Fukushima disaster. Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai plant in southwestern Japan is expected to resume operations on Aug. 10, the first to do so in nearly two years.

"I think that since the risk of nuclear power and the fact that human beings cannot control it has become clear, none of the reactors should be restarted," Hoshino said.

Akira Yamada, chairman of Fukushima's atomic bomb survivors group, says he reached a similar conclusion. Still, both men are wary of comparing the risks of nuclear power to the horror of atomic weapons.

"There is a difference between military use and peaceful use," said Yamada, who like Hoshino became a professor at Fukushima University after the war and later served as its president.

Seventy years after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the experiences of the elderly survivors remain seared in their memories.

Hoshino was a high school student deployed to a munitions factory when a U.S. bomber dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, killing nearly 140,000 people by the end of the year. Three days later, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

On Aug. 15, Japan surrendered.

For Hoshino, who had been out of the city but returned to search for missing classmates, one of his starkest memories is of finding two friends, one seemingly unhurt but unconscious, the other barely alive with his entire body — including nose, lips, and eyes — burned and blackened like charcoal.

The first died in a truck en route to their dorm. The other was alive, but his body was already infested with maggots, which Hoshino removed with tweezers, until that friend died, too.

"Even now, I cannot forget the appearance of those friends who were victims of the atomic bombing," he said.

Nagasaki survivor Yoshiteru Kohata, 86, who returned to his birthplace in Fukushima a few years after the war's end, says he long tried to forget the days after the bombing, when he helped the injured, and carried corpses up to the mountains for burial.

Recounting his experiences, such as hearing a young woman screaming "Please stop, Please stop," as an army doctor operated on her wounds without anaesthetic, still distresses him.

"Even now, when I tell the story, tears well up and my chest gets tight," added Kohata, a retired schoolteacher.

Yamada, 89, who was at home 2½ km from the center of the explosion when the bomb fell on Hiroshima, filling the sky with black clouds and red flames, says he knew early on that Japan was doomed to lose the war.

While Yamada was in middle school, his cousin, one year older, decided to apply to Yokaren, an Imperial Navy pilot school that ultimately trained many of the "kamikaze" pilots who flew suicide missions in the final months of the conflict.

"I told him, 'Give it up. Japan cannot win this war,'" Yamada said.

His cousin joined anyway and in February 1945 came to say farewell. " 'We have no gasoline. We have no planes. All I can do is die. You stay alive and work for Japan,' " Yamada quoted his cousin as saying.

Two months after Japan's surrender, the family was notified that his cousin had died in the bloody battle of Iwo Jima.

Kohata said he, too, might have flown to his death had an army colonel not told him to stay in school and train as a pilot. “There were many who died at the age of 16,” he said.

Like many “hibakusha” survivors, Yamada, Hoshino and Kohata are harsh critics of Abe, whose conservative agenda includes easing the constraints of Japan’s pacifist, postwar constitution on the military and adopting a less apologetic tone over the war.

Abe is set to mark the 70th anniversary of the war’s end with a statement that some fear will dilute past apologies.

“If you delve into the atomic bombings which had such inhumane results, it was because we fought that . . . war of aggression,” Yamada said, calling Japan’s wartime leaders “murderers.”

“But Mr. Abe is not delving deeply.”

Hoshino was even blunter. “I don’t think Shinzo Abe . . . truly recognizes that the war was a criminal war of aggression.”

A-bomb survivors opposed to nukes

August 5, 2015

A-bomb survivors speak out against nuclear power, decry Abe’s view of war

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Restart "ignoring the lives of residents"

August 10, 2015

UPDATE: Kyushu Electric announces Sendai nuclear plant restart amid protests

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201508100012

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

As about 100 demonstrators massed in front of company headquarters, Kyushu Electric Power Co. announced on Aug. 10 that it would resume operations at its Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture the following day.

The resumption of operations would be the first by a nuclear plant under stricter safety regulations imposed in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

At about 10:30 a.m. on Aug. 11, control rods at the No. 1 reactor of the Sendai plant will be removed to begin nuclear fission.

Kyushu Electric has informed the Nuclear Regulation Authority of its schedule for resuming operations at the Sendai plant.

On Aug. 10, company employees began a check to confirm the control rods were operating properly. If no problems arise from that inspection, work to resume operations will begin on Aug. 11.

About 12 hours after the control rods are removed, the No. 1 reactor is expected to reach criticality at which nuclear fission is self-sustaining.

If operations proceed smoothly, the plant will begin generating and transmitting electricity from Aug. 14. The reactor should reach its normal operating level by early September.

After the 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, operations at all nuclear plants in Japan came to a halt. Operations were temporarily resumed at the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture operated by Kansai Electric Power Co. Those reactors went offline in September 2013.

For the past year and 11 months, Japan has had no operating nuclear plants, but that hiatus will end with the Sendai plant resumption.

The tougher safety regulations were implemented from July 2013. The NRA decided in September 2014 that the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the Sendai plant met those new regulations, the first time approval has been given under the stricter regulations.

Kyushu Electric plans to resume operations of the No. 2 reactor at the Sendai plant in mid-October.

Meanwhile, about 100 citizens gathered in front of Kyushu Electric headquarters in Fukuoka city's Chuo Ward on Aug. 10 to protest the resumption of operations.

Tatsuya Yoshioka, director of Peace Boat, which organized the rally, said, "I cannot understand why operations are resuming."

Introducing participants who had come from South Korea, Yoshioka said, "Nuclear energy is an issue that extends beyond national borders."

Hiroko Uehara, a former mayor of Kunitachi in western Tokyo who now serves as secretary-general of a group of mayors seeking to move away from nuclear energy, pointed out that evacuation plans for citizens living near the Sendai plant were insufficient.

"We cannot allow the resumption of operations that ignores the lives of residents," she said.

On Aug. 9, about 2,000 protesters marched around the heavily guarded Sendai plant and voiced their opposition to the reactor restart.

"Past arguments that nuclear plants were safe and nuclear energy was cheap were all shown to be lies," said writer Satoshi Kamata, one of the demonstration organizers. "Kyushu Electric is not qualified to resume operations because it has not completed an anti-quake structure to oversee a possible accident as well as a venting facility (that is designed to prevent damage to a reactor by lowering pressure within the reactor pressure vessel)."

(This article was compiled from reports by Junichiro Nagasaki, Yosuke Hiruma, Keisuke Tanaka and Shoko Ishizuka.)

August 10, 2015

57% against Sendai restart

August 10, 2015

57% oppose Kyushu nuclear plant's reactivation: Mainichi poll

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150810p2a00m0na005000c.html>

Opposition to reactivation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture totaled 57 percent in a new Mainichi Shimbun public poll, while only 30 percent supported activating the plant again. The poll was conducted on Aug. 8 and 9. In a January Mainichi Shimbun poll, some 54 percent were opposed and 36 percent in favor.

Meanwhile, support for the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was 32 percent, down three points from a July poll. Opposition to Abe also fell by two points to 49 percent. The support level was the lowest yet on any Mainichi Shimbun poll since the start of the second Abe administration in December 2012, and among female voters, the administration's support level was only 26 percent. The largest reason for both support and opposition to the administration was its policies, with 27 percent in favor of the Abe Cabinet's policies against 61 percent who oppose them.

The largest group of poll respondents, 38 percent, said they supported no particular party. Next in popularity was the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) at 28 percent, followed by the Democratic Party of Japan at 9 percent, the Japan Innovation Party at 6 percent, Komeito at 4 percent, the Japanese Communist Party at 4 percent, and others with lower levels.

Among supporters of the Abe Cabinet, 47 percent supported the plant's reactivation, compared to 38 percent who were against it. Among those opposed to the administration, 74 percent opposed reactivation of the plant, while only 18 percent were in favor of it.

Looking at supporters of the LDP, 47 percent were in favor of reactivation of the Sendai plant, while 39 percent were opposed. Among those who supported no party, 26 percent were in favor of reactivation and 62 opposed it.

Among male voters, 41 percent approved of reactivation and 48 percent opposed it, while for female voters, 19 percent supported reactivation and 64 percent were against it.

At an Aug. 9 press conference in Nagasaki, Prime Minister Abe said, "We will give safety top priority with regards to nuclear plants. We will not reactivate them unless they meet with the new safety standards, which are the strictest in the world. We will strive for more understanding from the public."

All percentages in the poll results were rounded to the nearest digit.

The survey was conducted via telephone on Aug. 8 and 9, covering 1,627 households with at least one eligible voter, from which 1,015 responded.

Protesters at Sendai plant

Protesters rally at Sendai nuclear power plant

www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150811_17.html

Aug. 11, 2015 - Updated 04:30 UTC+2

Protesters are rallying outside the Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture, southwestern Japan in a last-ditch effort to stop the restart of a nuclear reactor at the plant. The restart will be the first under new safety rules established after the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

About 200 activists from both in and out of the prefecture gathered in front of the plant early on Tuesday morning.

Using loudspeakers, they shouted "Don't forget the nuclear accident at Fukushima Daiichi!" and "Do not restart the Sendai plant!"

Police officers and the plant's guards are deployed around the protesters.

A 22-year-old student taking part in the rally said the plant's restart is not an issue limited to Kagoshima, but also affects other areas.

He said he does not want the plant to be restarted under the current conditions. He said he is worried that the local emergency evacuation plan is inadequate, especially for old people.

August 10, 2015

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As about 100 demonstrators massed in front of company headquarters, Kyushu Electric Power Co. announced on Aug. 10 that it would resume operations at its Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture the following day.

The resumption of operations would be the first by a nuclear plant under stricter safety regulations imposed in the wake of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

At about 10:30 a.m. on Aug. 11, control rods at the No. 1 reactor of the Sendai plant will be removed to begin nuclear fission.

Kyushu Electric has informed the Nuclear Regulation Authority of its schedule for resuming operations at the Sendai plant.

On Aug. 10, company employees began a check to confirm the control rods were operating properly. If no problems arise from that inspection, work to resume operations will begin on Aug. 11.

About 12 hours after the control rods are removed, the No. 1 reactor is expected to reach criticality at which nuclear fission is self-sustaining.

If operations proceed smoothly, the plant will begin generating and transmitting electricity from Aug. 14. The reactor should reach its normal operating level by early September.

After the 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, operations at all nuclear plants in Japan came to a halt. Operations were temporarily resumed at the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture operated by Kansai Electric Power Co. Those reactors went offline in September 2013.

For the past year and 11 months, Japan has had no operating nuclear plants, but that hiatus will end with the Sendai plant resumption.

The tougher safety regulations were implemented from July 2013. The NRA decided in September 2014 that the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the Sendai plant met those new regulations, the first time approval has been given under the stricter regulations.

Kyushu Electric plans to resume operations of the No. 2 reactor at the Sendai plant in mid-October.

Meanwhile, about 100 citizens gathered in front of Kyushu Electric headquarters in Fukuoka city's Chuo Ward on Aug. 10 to protest the resumption of operations.

Tatsuya Yoshioka, director of Peace Boat, which organized the rally, said, "I cannot understand why operations are resuming."

Introducing participants who had come from South Korea, Yoshioka said, "Nuclear energy is an issue that extends beyond national borders."

Hiroko Uehara, a former mayor of Kunitachi in western Tokyo who now serves as secretary-general of a group of mayors seeking to move away from nuclear energy, pointed out that evacuation plans for citizens living near the Sendai plant were insufficient.

"We cannot allow the resumption of operations that ignores the lives of residents," she said.

On Aug. 9, about 2,000 protesters marched around the heavily guarded Sendai plant and voiced their opposition to the reactor restart.

"Past arguments that nuclear plants were safe and nuclear energy was cheap were all shown to be lies," said writer Satoshi Kamata, one of the demonstration organizers. "Kyushu Electric is not qualified to

resume operations because it has not completed an anti-quake structure to oversee a possible accident as well as a venting facility (that is designed to prevent damage to a reactor by lowering pressure within the reactor pressure vessel)."

(This article was compiled from reports by Junichiro Nagasaki, Yosuke Hiruma, Keisuke Tanaka and Shoko Ishizuka.)

Protesters rally against restart

Protests as Japan's Kyushu Electric restarts Sendai reactor

The restart marks Japan's return to nuclear energy after the 2011 Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant disaster

Source : Al Jazeera

<http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/8/11/japans-kyushu-electric-restarts-sendai-reactor.html>
(see also video)

August 11, 2015 12:05AM ET

A power plant operator in southern Japan restarted a nuclear reactor on Tuesday, the first to begin operating under new safety requirements following the Fukushima disaster.

Kyushu Electric Power Co. said Tuesday it had restarted the No. 1 reactor at its Sendai nuclear plant as planned. The restart marks Japan's return to nuclear energy four-and-half-years after the 2011 meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant in northeastern Japan following an earthquake and tsunami. In the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl 25 years earlier.

The plant on the west coast of Kyushu island is the furthest away of Japan's reactors from Tokyo, where protesters regularly gather outside the prime minister's official residence to oppose atomic energy.

At nearly 600 miles from Tokyo, Sendai is closer to Shanghai or Seoul.

Japan's nuclear power plants set to re-open 3:23

Al Jazeera America News | August 10, 2015

On Tuesday, Tomomitsu Sakata, a spokesman for Kyushu Electric Power, said the reactor was put back online as planned without any problems.

The Fukushima disaster displaced more than 100,000 people due to radioactive contamination and spurred a national debate over this resource-scarce country's reliance on nuclear power.

A majority of Japanese oppose the return to nuclear energy. Dozens of protesters, including ex-Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who was in office at the time of the disaster and has become an outspoken critic of nuclear power, were gathered outside the plant as police stood guard.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority affirmed the safety of the Sendai reactor and another one at the plant last September under stricter safety rules imposed after the 2011 accident, the worst since the 1986 Chernobyl explosion. The second Sendai reactor is due to restart in October.

Koichi Miyazawa, Japan's industry minister, said Tuesday that the government would "put safety first" in resuming use of nuclear power.

Protesters outside the Sendai plant are not convinced.

"You will need to change where you evacuate to depending on the direction of the wind. The current evacuation plan is nonsense," said Shouhei Nomura, a 79-year-old former worker at a nuclear plant equipment maker, who now opposes atomic energy and is living in a protest camp near the plant.

All of Japan's 43 workable reactors were idled for the past two years pending safety checks. To offset the shortfall in power output, the country ramped up imports of oil and gas and fired up more thermal power plants, slowing progress toward reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has sought to have the reactors restarted as soon as possible to help reduce costly reliance on imported oil and gas and alleviate the financial burden on utilities of maintaining the idled plants.

Utilities are seeking approvals to restart 23 reactors, including the other Sendai reactor.

Protesters voice strong concerns as Japan restarts nuclear reactor

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150811p2a00m0na015000c.html>



People shout in protest against the restart of a reactor at the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Satumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, on Aug. 11, 2015. (Mainichi)

People across Japan held anti-nuclear power protest rallies on Aug. 11 after a reactor at the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture was reactivated on the morning of the same day, while the government emphasizes that the reactor has passed what it calls "the world's strictest safety regulations."

About 160 people gathered at the front gate of the nuclear plant in the Kagoshima Prefecture city of Satsumasendai before 7 a.m. to stage a protest rally. Right before the clock struck 10:30 a.m., the time the No. 1 reactor at the plant was reactivated, people held a silent protest while staring in the direction where the reactor was located. They then shouted, "Don't turn it on!"

Keisuke Hamanoue, 34, who traveled from the city of Akune, a northern neighbor of Satsumasendai, to participate in the rally with his wife, claimed that no nuclear plant should be reactivated until soil in Fukushima Prefecture contaminated in the 2011 nuclear meltdowns is restored to its pre-disaster condition. "It's not right to prioritize the economy," he added.

Another protester, Kaho Kumakawa, a 21-year-old university student from the Kagoshima Prefecture city of Aira, said, "We must not allow the activation of a nuclear plant as long as there is even 1 percent chance of an accident." Part of her hometown is located within the 30-kilometer evacuation zone from the Sendai nuclear plant.

Some members of a citizens' group parked five cars alongside the plant's front gate for about four hours from around 6 a.m. to block vehicles, which resulted in a standoff between protest participants and police officers who demanded the citizens' group move the cars.

Meanwhile in Tokyo, an anti-nuclear power protest was also held in front of the prime minister's official residence in Chiyoda Ward.

"While the economy is important, growth is only possible with the Earth," commented Setagaya Ward resident Kinu Goto, 33, who joined the rally.

Tsutomu Saito, 61, from Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, said, "There is still a danger of 'unexpected' situations (with nuclear plants). I hope the government listens to the public's voices, not just opinions from businesses."

Protests haven't stopped restart

August 11, 2015

Amid protests, Kyushu Electric restarts Sendai nuclear plant in Kagoshima

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201508110066

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

SATSUMA-SENDAI, Kagoshima Prefecture--Kyushu Electric Power Co. activated the No. 1 reactor of the Sendai nuclear power plant here on Aug. 11, the first to be restarted in Japan under new safety regulations instituted after the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The reactor is the first of 43 across the nation to be brought back online, ending a period with no nuclear power, which lasted for a year and 11 months.

As anti-nuclear protesters rallied around the Sendai plant, located in Satsuma-Sendai city, work to restart the No. 1 reactor began in the central control room at 10:30 a.m. on Aug. 11.

Kyushu Electric workers pulled a lever to remove the control rods that had curbed nuclear fission in the reactor.

The 32 control rods began to withdraw, reactivating the reactor.

The reactor is expected to reach criticality, in which nuclear fission is self-sustaining, at around 11 p.m. on Aug. 11. Steam produced from the heat generated by the nuclear fission will drive a turbine to produce electricity.

The generation and transmission of electricity is expected to begin on Aug. 14. The output will be raised gradually, reaching full power generation in late August and shifting to a commercial operation in early September.

In a statement, Kyushu Electric Power President Michiaki Uriu said, "The activation of the nuclear reactor is one of the important steps in the process for restart. We will continue to deal sincerely with the government's inspections and proceed with the subsequent process by putting a top priority on safety."

In September 2014, the Sendai nuclear power plant passed the new safety regulations for the first time in the nation. In March this year, the Nuclear Regulation Authority started the inspection process that is required before a nuclear reactor can be reactivated. In July, nuclear fuel was brought into the reactor. As operations of the reactor had been suspended for about four years, Kyushu Electric proceeded cautiously with the preparations.

All nuclear reactors in Japan were taken offline soon after the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered three meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. Though Kansai Electric Power Co. temporarily operated the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors of its Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture to deal with an electricity shortage, it suspended operations again in September 2013.

The electric power industry is pushing for the restart of idled nuclear reactors. The Abe administration also regards nuclear power as vital to the nation's power needs.

Kyushu Electric plans to restart the No. 2 reactor at its Sendai nuclear power plant in mid-October.

Preparations for a restart are progressing at the No. 3 and the No. 4 reactors of Kansai Electric's Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture and the No. 3 reactor of Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture.

One stumbling block for the Takahama plant is a temporary injunction the Fukui District Court issued in April this year to prohibit the restart.

Meanwhile, anxieties remain among residents living near nuclear power plants over insufficient emergency measures in the event of a nuclear accident. For example, the formulation of evacuation plans has been delayed for some medical and welfare facilities that house many elderly people.

In the Kyushu region where the Sendai nuclear power plant is situated, volcanic activity poses a threat. Therefore, some opponents argue that it is necessary for nuclear power plants to take safety measures against major eruptions.

The spread of summer power-saving campaigns and solar power generation have reduced concerns over electricity shortages even when no nuclear reactors are operating. A stable electricity supply is continuing across the nation even amid a serious heat wave.

Opposition to the restart of nuclear plants remains strong among the public.
(This article was written by Junichiro Nagasaki and Takeshi Nakashima.)

Restarting "absurd"

August 12, 2015

Nuclear crisis evacuee says reactor restart ignores Fukushima reality

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150812p2a00m0na007000c.html>

The tone of Hajime Anbe's voice, usually soft, becomes forceful when asked about the reactivation of the No. 1 reactor at Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture.

"I cannot believe that a nuclear reactor has been restarted when the prospects of decommissioning the stricken Fukushima plant are still unclear," he says. "It's absurd, and rattles the nerves of those of us who have had to evacuate." As a result of the Fukushima crisis, the 79-year-old Anbe has been forced to flee his home in the prefectural town of Namie and is temporarily living in Shimotsuke, Tochigi Prefecture. He is among the 110,000 people still evacuated, four years and five months since the disaster broke out.

Anbe has a bitter past. In the latter half of the 1960s, Tohoku Electric Power Co. announced the possibility of building a nuclear power plant in Namie and neighboring areas. The planned site was approximately one kilometer east of Anbe's home. Convinced that such a plant would bring more jobs to his town, Anbe agreed to allow the road behind his home to be used as a route to the plant. He worked to obtain the support of other local residents and took care of the road, cutting the grass that grew on it.

Ultimately, due to residents' objections and other factors, the plan fell through. Looking back, Anbe says, "I completely believed in nuclear power's 'safety myth.' I should've done more research."

His love for his hometown goes back 70 years, to the end of World War II. When his two older brothers returned from the battlefield, they expressed relief that even though Japan had lost the war, they had a hometown to return to. They told him that now that peace had arrived, they should work to make their hometown into a great place. With that ambition in his heart, Anbe took over the family's farming business, expanded their farmland to six hectares, and devoted himself to growing rice.

His home in Namie is in a zone designated as preparing for the lifting of an evacuation directive. Because he believes his hometown will cease to exist unless its residents return, Anbe is planning to go back as soon as the evacuation order is lifted. An increasing number of residents are giving up any hopes of returning, however, disappointed that the crisis is far from being brought under control.

"Our hometown survived the war, but this time it might really disappear," Anbe laments. And that fear is what pushes him to object to the reactivation of nuclear reactors, which feels to him like pretending the Fukushima disaster never happened.

Protesters at Sendai plant

August 12, 2015

Protesters gather as reactor in Kagoshima restarts

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/12/national/protestors-gather-reactor-kagoshima-restarts/#.VctQmvnwmov>

Kyodo

KAGOSHIMA – More than 100 people rallied Tuesday in front of the Sendai power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture to protest Japan's first reactivation of a nuclear reactor in nearly two years.

Blasting the restart as a hasty decision, the crowd at the gates of Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s complex in the city of Satumasendai called for abandoning nuclear power amid safety concerns.

Other residents, however, were hopeful that it will boost the local economy.

"We cannot live here without a nuclear plant. Once it is restarted, we will get money from the central government and the town will thrive," said an 81-year-old man at a local shopping arcade.

The reactor is the first to go back online under new, stricter regulations imposed after the meltdown disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 plant following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

People in Fukushima also had mixed feelings. While many in the prefecture which was devastated by the disaster oppose nuclear power, some acknowledged the economic benefits of having a nuclear power plant.

"Why did they choose to restart it on the 11th (day of the month, the same day as the Fukushima disaster), when the reactivation itself is heart-wrenching enough?" asked Haruko Kanai, 66, who had to evacuate from Namie, Fukushima Prefecture, due to radioactive contamination.

"I feel a swirl of anger, sorrow and disillusionment," she said. "I don't want others to experience the same suffering that I have."

The group Mayors for a Nuclear Power Free Japan, comprising current and former mayors in 37 prefectures, released a statement saying people living near nuclear power stations can't feel secure under the current framework and questioned the effectiveness of evacuation plans.

Not everyone worries about restart

August 12, 2015

Tears, fears, whoops of joy as Sendai reactor restarted

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201508120060

August 12, 2015

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

SATSUMA-SENDAI, Kagoshima Prefecture--Some residents wept as Kyushu Electric Power Co. started up the Sendai nuclear power plant's No. 1 reactor on Aug. 11, while others applauded the decision.

It was the first reactor in Japan to come back online since operations came to a halt nationwide nearly two years ago in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011.

About 200 people gathered in front of the main gate of the Sendai plant on Aug. 11 to protest the restart. Calls of "Kyushu Electric has no respect for life," and "Remember Fukushima," were heard as the demonstrators took turns speaking into microphones to voice their concerns.

The loudest outcry came at 10:30 a.m., when Kyushu Electric Power started up the No. 1 reactor. Some of the protesters were in tears.

More than 200 police officers were deployed at the site in case of trouble.

The reactor was the first facility to receive approval for restart after passing stricter safety regulations instituted after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

It was the first of Japan's 43 reactors to be brought back online, ending a period with no nuclear power in the nation that had lasted one year and 11 months.

"Our lives will be threatened if radiation leaks," said a 48-year-old woman from Aira, Kagoshima Prefecture, who attended the protest with her junior and senior high school student daughters. "It's highly irrational that our voices are being ignored."

Elsewhere, some restaurant and hotel operators in Satsuma-Sendai voiced their support for the reactor's restart.

"People from all over Japan will come and visit the plant. I'm looking forward to it," said a man in his 40s who runs a hotel.

"As long as they're safe, we believe nuclear power plants are necessary in vitalizing local economies," added Hideo Iwakiri, the mayor of Satsuma-Sendai.

TEPCO's mounting legal challenges

Fukushima operator's mounting legal woes to fuel nuclear opposition

Source : Reuters

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/fukushima-operators-mounting-legal-woes-fuel-nuclear-opposition-210834627--finance.html#z4lDBk7>



By Kentaro Hamada, Reuters via Yahoo, August 16, 2015
<http://tinyurl.com/qfqopl8>

IWAKI, Japan (Reuters) - Four and a half years after the Fukushima disaster, and as Japan tentatively restarts nuclear power elsewhere, the legal challenges are mounting for the crippled plant's operator. They include a judge's forced disclosure of a 2008 internal document prepared for managers at Tokyo Electric Power Co warning of a need for precautions against an unprecedented nuclear catastrophe. Also, class actions against Tepco and the government now have more plaintiffs than any previous Japanese contamination suit and, overruling reluctant prosecutors, criminal charges have been levelled against former Tepco executives for failing to take measures to prevent the 2011 meltdowns and explosions.

Radiation from the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986 forced 160,000 people from their homes, many never to return, and destroyed businesses, fisheries and agriculture. The criminal and civil legal cases do not threaten financial ruin for Tepco, which is now backstopped by Japanese taxpayers and faces far bigger costs to decommission the Fukushima plant and clean up the surrounding areas.

Rather, the cases could further increase opposition to nuclear restarts -- which consistently beats support by about two-to-one -- as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government pushes to restore nuclear to Japan's energy mix to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuel.

"The nuclear plant disaster has upended our way of life," evacuee and former beekeeper Takahisa Ogawa, 45, testified recently in a court in Iwaki, near the Fukushima power station. "We've lost the support we counted on."

PROVING NEGLIGENCE

Ogawa and other plaintiffs are seeking 20 million yen (£102,192) each in damages from Tepco. More than 10,000 evacuees and nearby residents have brought at least 20 lawsuits against the utility and the

government over the handling of the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant 220 km (130 miles) north of Tokyo.

The biggest class action, with 4,000 plaintiffs, seeks to dramatically increase Tepco's liability by proving negligence under Japan's civil law, rather than simply proving harm and seeking compensation, said lead attorney Gentaro Managi.

Japan recently approved increasing the amount of compensation payments through a government-run fund to 7 trillion yen (\$56 billion).

Prosecutors twice declined to charge former Tepco bosses over their handling of the disaster, citing a lack of evidence, but a citizens' panel overruled them last month. It's unlikely the three former executives, who will be summoned to give evidence in court, will be convicted as it is hard to prove criminal acts in this type of case, said Nicholes Benes of The Board Director Training Institute of Japan.

The legal actions against Tepco are "serious for the industry" as it seeks to gradually bring some of Japan's 43 idled nuclear reactors back online, said Tom O'Sullivan, an independent energy consultant and former investment banker.

"With potentially up to 25 reactors coming online, board members of other electric power companies must be quite nervous about what could happen if something goes wrong," he said. "Most reactors have been switched off for four years so switching them back on is going to be potentially problematic, not to mention the risk of natural disasters."

"UNAVOIDABLE"

It's unclear what bearing the various lawsuits against Tepco might have on one another, but a common thread is that it should have anticipated the possibility of a devastating quake and tsunami and taken steps to reduce the impact.

The company maintains that the severity of the 9.0 magnitude quake and 13-meter wave could not have been predicted.

But the document introduced as evidence in the shareholders' suit after a judge forced Tepco to produce it, appears to challenge that. The "Tsunami Measures Unavoidable" report, dated September 2008, was filed with the Tokyo District Court in June, but has not been widely reported.

The unnamed authors prepared the report for a meeting attended by the head of the power station and marked the document "to be collected after discussion." It's not clear whether senior executives in Tokyo saw the report at the time.

The report called for Tepco to prepare for a worse tsunami than it previously assumed, based on experts' views.

"Considering that it is difficult to completely reject the opinions given thus far of academic experts on earthquakes and tsunami, as well as the expertise of the [government's] Headquarters for Earthquake Research Promotion, it is unavoidable to have tsunami countermeasures that assume a higher tsunami than at present," says the report.

"This is prime evidence that Tepco recognised the need for tsunami measures," said Hiroyuki Kawai, lead attorney in the shareholders' suit. "This will have an important impact on the lawsuit."

Tepco, in a court filing, counters that the document "does not mean there was a risk that a tsunami would strike and did not assume any specific tsunami countermeasures."

Asked to comment further on the internal report and the range of legal problems facing the company, Tepco spokesman Kohji Sakakibara told Reuters, "We cannot answer these questions because they pertain to lawsuits and because they suppose a hypothetical determination of negligence. However, the company is making appropriate assertions in the lawsuits and expects that in the end the courts will render fair judgements."

The shareholder lawsuit, filed in March 2012, seeks to establish responsibility for the disaster and demands 5.5 trillion yen [\$44 billion] in damages from current and former executives. A verdict is not expected for at least a year.

"This is likely to become a long battle where lawsuits go on for several decades or half a century," said Shunichi Teranishi, a professor emeritus of law at Hitotsubashi University in Tokyo, comparing it to the Minamata mercury poisoning disaster in the 1950s, where lawsuits continue to be filed to this day.

(Reporting by Kentaro Hamada; additional reporting by Aaron Sheldrick; Writing by Osamu Tsukimori; Editing by William Mallard & Ian Geoghegan)

see also :

August 17, 2015

Tepco facing plaintiff surge over Fukushima debacle, '08 disaster warning

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/17/national/crime-legal/tepco-facing-plaintiff-surge-fukushima-debacle-08-disaster-warning/#.VdHf7pfwmos>

Antinuke movement needs "social and political innovation"

August 15, 2015

Nuclear activists need injection of fresh ideas

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/08/15/national/antinuclear-activists-need-injection-fresh-ideas/#.VdCRCfnwmot>

by Eric Johnston

Staff Writer

One of the basic jobs of any journalist is to cover public demonstrations. Not only do they make for great stories, they also provide the reporter with a chance to play amateur social anthropologist by observing how the individuals and groups involved interact with each other, and the public, before, during and after the protest itself.

As the nuclear power plants owned by Kansai Electric Power Co. and other utilities head toward restart, we've heard much about the return of the nuclear power village. However, we've heard less about the traditional, elderly and semi-professional antinuclear activists also making a return, so to speak.

After the Great East Japan Earthquake and subsequent nuclear crisis in Fukushima Prefecture four years ago, a broad range of citizens in Kansai and the rest of the country chose to start protesting nuclear power. They weren't the typical, sometimes jaded activists of the past who have decades of experience demonstrating. They were simply earnest citizens spontaneously exercising their democratic rights, and the way they interacted with the seasoned marchers was interesting.

The traditional antinuclear movement was taken aback by the newcomers. Set in their ways and suspicious of outsiders, some older activists were contemptuous of any protest they themselves didn't

organize. Other veterans were blatant self-promoters more interested in doing TV interviews or pontificating in high-brow magazines than in actually protesting, and didn't want to share the media limelight.

With the restart of the Sendai No. 1 plant in Kagoshima Prefecture, it's clear that, while millions of people from all walks of life remain opposed to nuclear power and will still take to the streets to protest, the traditional antinuclear movement, thankfully, has not disappeared. The problem is, it's unclear if the old activists have learned anything new these past four years, or if they even want to engage the broader public.

The great thing about the organic protests that came after the Fukushima disasters is that those involved made extensive use of social media and worked hard to be inclusive and easily understood. They did not instinctively see, as too many older protesters do, either the mainstream media or the broader public as sworn enemies with whom deep conversation should be avoided. They saw **stopping nuclear power as an urgent civic duty all Japanese ought to participate in — not as a lifelong quasi-profession taken on by the self-chosen few.**

Many who first protested against Fukushima continue to protest today using inclusive, modern methods. But from the Sendai plant to Kansai and beyond, long-term activists are back in the forefront of protests. Thus I look forward to receiving hand-drawn paper flyers and notices at "citizens rallies" that can be understood by anybody off the street with an advanced degree in nuclear engineering, a fair bit of knowledge about Japanese law, and decades of experience following the issue. And let's not forget the three or four hours of long-winded speeches from the veterans that follow — the ones with little or no Q&A from audience members. Yes, "succinct" and "broad public debate" are concepts too often missing from the traditional activist lexicon.

With two Kansai Electric Power Co. plants in Fukui Prefecture close to restarting, the Kansai region will likely be the next major battleground for the pro- and antinuclear movements. No one denies that the old guard's experience, knowledge and commitment is crucial to effective opposition. But people, especially young people, in Osaka, Kyoto, Nara and Kobe also need to see a movement that includes fresh faces, one that innovates by being inclusive, media-savvy and egalitarian.

The traditional antinuclear movement resembles too many of Kansai's small- and medium-sized enterprises: behind the times when it comes to image and technology, unwilling to change business practices, and interested only in serving old customers. Social and political innovation is the key to the movement's survival, and will help influence the future of nuclear power. Not only in Kansai, but across all of Japan.

View from Osaka is a monthly column that examines the latest news from a Kansai perspective.

August 15, 2015

Shibuya: Anti-nuke and anti-war performers

August 13, 2015

Musicians slam Abe's security moves, sing for peace in Shibuya

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201508130055

By YOHEI GOTO/ Staff Writer

The bustling square outside Tokyo's Shibuya Station was transformed Aug. 12 into a live music venue where performers belted out anti-war and anti-nuke protest songs.

World Peace Festival near the famed Hachiko statue was a free music event aimed at raising awareness of peace and democracy in the face of the Abe administration's efforts to push through unpopular security legislation this summer.

Organized by DJ Syuya Okino, the nighttime event featured funk band Osaka Monaurail and other artists. The performers sang their opposition to the security legislation, which would greatly expand the role of the Self-Defense Forces overseas, and moves to resume operations at nuclear power plants nationwide. A yearning for world peace defined the mood.

"I fear that if we accept changes in interpretation of the Japanese Constitution at the administration's discretion, the time may come when the administration can change anything they want, even more than just the national security system," hip-hop musician DELI told the crowd.

"If that happens, the day may come when we won't be free to perform live here."

World-renowned musician, composer and peace activist Ryuichi Sakamoto sent along a statement of solidarity.

"I feel strongly that democracy is not functioning in Japan," his statement said.

"The ruling party is trying to emasculate the Constitution by interpreting it arbitrarily on the premise that 'they won a mandate from the Japanese people.'"

Nuclear power poses fundamental problems

August 12, 2015

Editorial: Japan should not depend on nuclear power

Kyushu Electric Power Co. restarted the No. 1 reactor at its Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, on Aug. 11. The move comes four years and five months after the outbreak of the crisis at the tsunami-ravaged Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant that severely affected local residents' livelihoods.

It was the first reactivation of a nuclear reactor under the new regulatory standards enforced following the nuclear accident triggered by the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The central government and power companies apparently intend to use the resumption of operations at the Sendai plant as a springboard to restart idled nuclear reactors one after another across the country. However, the government's basic stance toward nuclear power has remained unchanged since the outbreak of the disaster, and lessons learned from the catastrophic accident have not been sufficiently put to good use. The restart of the Sendai plant's reactor must not be a step toward reviving the pre-disaster myth of nuclear plants' infallible safety.

Lessons learned from the disaster include: Nuclear accidents can happen even if countermeasures are taken and that damage caused by nuclear accidents to people, the environment and society differ markedly from that triggered by other accidents in terms of quality and scale. Moreover, Japan is a volcanic country prone to earthquakes. Such being the case, it is highly risky to continue operating atomic power stations in this country. Nuclear energy is far from being a sustainable energy source when considering how to dispose of radioactive waste. Therefore, the Mainichi Shimbun has insisted that Japan should stop using nuclear plants as early as possible.

At the same time, the Mainichi Shimbun has said there could be occasions where Japan must approve of the minimum necessary operation of atomic power plants under certain conditions, taking into account economic and social risks that would be caused by an immediate halt to all nuclear plants.

However, the latest reactivation of the Sendai plant's No. 1 reactor does not meet such conditions and should not have been approved.

In the first place, the government has not clearly characterized the restart as part of the process of phasing out nuclear power. The basic energy plan approved by the Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last year states that Japan's reliance on atomic power will be reduced to the minimum possible level. As such, it is the national government's duty to draw up a road map toward steadily phasing out nuclear power in line with this policy.

However, the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry has set the ratio of nuclear power to total electric power to be generated in Japan in 2030 at 20-to-22 percent. To achieve this, it would be necessary to rebuild or extend the use of aging nuclear reactors beyond the 40-year limit, and construct new reactors. This indicates the government intends to return to a society dependent on atomic power.

The essential condition of minimizing damage that would be caused by a nuclear accident to local residents has not been met. It is true that the new regulatory standards require nuclear plant operators to implement stricter safety measures, assuming serious accidents that had not been assumed under the previous standards. The Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) that examines whether nuclear reactors meet the regulatory standards has become more independent of the government. However, these measures to beef up safety measures are necessary conditions but are not sufficient.

In the Fukushima nuclear crisis, confusion in the chain of command worsened the situation. Information on the spread of radioactive substances was not provided to local residents, causing some of them to flee to areas where radiation levels were higher. The evacuation of hospitalized patients and residents of nursing care facilities was greatly confused and many people died while evacuating or at evacuation shelters. Following the accident, the zone where local bodies are required to work out evacuation plans for local residents was expanded from 8-10 kilometers from nuclear plants to 30 kilometers.

Evacuation plans have been worked out for residents near the Sendai plant, but evacuation drills have not been conducted to secure the effectiveness of the plan. The national government has tolerated the local body's failure. The attitude to hastily restart the Sendai nuclear reactor without taking sufficient safety measures for local residents is apparently based on the myth of nuclear plants' infallible safety. To ensure the safety of local residents, the local government should conduct evacuation drills, clarify problems involving the evacuation plan and even suspend operations at the plant depending on the results of the drills.

A lack of clarity for responsibility over reactivating nuclear plants has not changed since before the March 2011 outbreak of the nuclear plant crisis. Since nuclear plants are operated by private companies as business activities, power companies are primarily responsible for restarting atomic power stations and ensuring safety at the plants. However, nuclear plants are operated as part of the government's policy. The government intends to approve reactivation of nuclear reactors as long as the reactors meet the

regulatory standards, while the NRA is of the view that meeting the standards does not necessarily mean the plants are absolutely safe. This has raised concerns that nobody would be held responsible if another nuclear accident were to take place, just as was the case with the Fukushima crisis.

There are more fundamental problems. The government has failed to show its determination to promote a nuclear and energy policy while gaining public understanding.

In most opinion polls conducted by various news organizations, those who are opposed to restarting nuclear plants have outnumbered those in favor since the March 2011 accident. In an Aug. 8-9 survey conducted by the Mainichi Shimbun, 57 percent of the respondents expressed opposition to resuming operations at the No. 1 reactor at the Sendai power station.

Still, no means have been secured to reflect public opinion in the country's energy policy even following the nuclear accident that has had such a huge impact on local residents. The process of using an advisory panel to the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry to determine the direction of the nation's energy policy has remained unchanged since before the crisis. The previous government led by the Democratic Party of Japan, which is now the largest opposition party, at least attempted to conduct a deliberative poll and took other measures to reflect public opinion in the energy policy. However, the current administration has not even shown such a stance.

The fact that radioactive waste will only accumulate as long as atomic power plants are operated poses a serious challenge. It is necessary to consider final disposal of radioactive waste on the assumption that it will take 100,000 years before such waste becomes harmless, but Japan has no prospects for working out any feasible disposal plan. Even if a nuclear accident were not to occur again, atomic power stations can not be maintained over a long period as long as no solution is found to problems involving the final disposal of radioactive waste.

First and foremost, the government should draw up a specific road map toward scrapping nuclear power. It is also necessary to create a system under which the NRA would evaluate local governments' evacuation plans and drills in advance. The restart of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant should not be used as a springboard to revive Japan's dependence on atomic power.

[Click here for Japanese article](#)

August 12, 2015 (Mainichi Japan)

Doubts about Sendai reactivation

August 18, 2015

Renewable energy entrepreneurs criticize nuclear plant reactivation

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150818p2a00m0na019000c.html>

Two renewable energy entrepreneurs aiming for a society that is not dependent on nuclear power are voicing their doubts about the reactivation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant on Aug. 11.

"Everyone knows what's going on in Fukushima. Will they restart their nuclear reactors anyway? From a Fukushima perspective, I want to change the current situation of putting the economy first," says Minoru Kobayashi, 63, president of the Iitate Denryoku power company. Using funds provided by citizens of the

village of Iitate, which remains completely evacuated due to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the company was founded in September last year.

Some 200 of the company's solar panels sit in rows in a hilly region of the village. Installed in February this year, they are to help support the villagers' life when they return to the village one day. Together, the panels output 49.5 kilowatts. Selling at 32 yen per kilowatt-hour to Tohoku Electric Power Co. over 20 years, the installation is expected to produce about 1.6 million yen in profit a year.

Before the Fukushima disaster, Kobayashi raised around 30 wagyu cattle at a ranch, and grew rice in fields across 11 hectares. Soon after the disaster, he evacuated his cattle to an acquaintance's ranch in the town of Zao, Miyagi Prefecture. Even now, Kobayashi travels from his evacuation home in Kitakata, Fukushima Prefecture, to care for his cattle.

While working on producing rice for sake in Kitakata, Kobayashi met Yauemon Sato, 64, president of a sake brewery. After the Fukushima disaster, Sato created the Aizu Electric Power Co. to spread renewable energy. Kobayashi decided to make his own such company.

"The nuclear disaster robbed the people of Iitate of their everyday lives. We don't need nuclear plants anymore," Kobayashi says. With advice from Sato, he was able to raise over 10 million yen in funds for the new company from Iitate villagers and local businesses.

Regarding the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant's reactivation, Kobayashi says, "The people who live there decided on that. I can't easily criticize it." He understands because in Fukushima Prefecture as well, many people worked at and made their living from nuclear plant-related companies. He adds, however, "If they made the decision while pretending not to have seen the Fukushima disaster, that is a tragedy."

"We will rejuvenate our village with renewable energy, even if it isn't right away. We have to show that to the people around the nation and make them think about whether nuclear power is really necessary," he says.

Meanwhile, Yuji Onuma, 39, who evacuated from the town of Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, to Koga, Ibaraki Prefecture, started a solar power business last summer, aiming to help bring about a nuclear power-free society.

"The issue of where to dispose of used nuclear fuel has not yet been solved. How can they restart reactors while the future remains so cloudy?" he says.

Onuma has installed 1,188 solar panels in a total of five locations in Ibaraki and Tochigi prefectures. They produce a total 219,000 kilowatts a year. Onuma sells power to Tokyo Electric Power Co., making 100,000 to 200,000 yen a month.

When Onuma was in elementary school, he thought up a pro-nuclear slogan, "Nuclear power, the energy of a bright future," that was used on a sign set up along a national road in Futaba. Since the nuclear disaster, the municipal government has been moving to have the sign removed due to its deterioration from age, but Onuma is fighting to have it kept in place as a reminder of the disaster.

Onuma says, "In an instant, the nuclear plant disaster destroyed the nature and work of people that had taken many years to produce. There was no bright future for nuclear energy." Regarding the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant's reactivation, he was critical, saying, "The lesson (of the Fukushima disaster) was supposed to be that we get away from nuclear power."

Onuma goes solar

August 20, 2015

Nuclear slogan writer who saw the light now banks on solar power

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201508200003>

By AKEMI KANDA/ Staff Writer

NASU-KARASUYAMA, Tochigi Prefecture--It's the dawn of a sunny new day for a man who as a schoolboy dreamed up an upbeat slogan for a signboard used to promote the now crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Yuji Onuma, 39, recently launched a solar power plant here to bring about a "bright future" without nuclear energy.

Onuma, the creator of the iconic "Nuclear energy is the energy of a bright future" sign that still hangs in Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, hopes his new venture will mark a fresh start for his life, which was greatly affected by the country's energy policy.

"Until the Fukushima accident occurred, I thought my life relied on the prosperity of nuclear energy, but I lost everything when the nuclear plant ended up as a failure," he said. "My life is still intertwined with the electric industry, but I could make a fresh restart this time thanks to this renewable energy project."

In 1988, Onuma, then an elementary school sixth-grader in Futaba, which co-hosts the damaged plant, came up with the signboard slogan as a homework project.

The slogan became a local fixture on an overhead signboard that greets visitors at the entrance to a central shopping street of the town. After growing up, he became a real estate agent and operated apartments for plant workers in the town.

But in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, triggered by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in March 2011, his family's life has been turned upside down, just as it has for all Futaba residents.

The family has spent more than four years living as evacuees, first in Anjo, Aichi Prefecture, and elsewhere. These experiences have made Onuma reflect on his elementary school slogan and his naive acceptance of nuclear energy.

Thus, in building his solar power plant in Nasu-Karasuyama in eastern Tochigi Prefecture, Onuma and his wife, Serina, 40, decided to place a signboard with the modified message, "Renewable energy is the energy of a bright future" in its compound.

It is the sixth solar power plant he has built in Tochigi and Ibaraki prefectures since he opened the first in Sakura, Tochigi Prefecture, in May last year.

The six power plants are capable of generating a total of 236 kilowatts of electricity, which ironically is sold to Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, using the government's feed-in-tariff system for renewable energy. The system, introduced in July 2012, obligates electric utilities to purchase renewable energy generated by developers at fixed rates.

Onuma's solar power plants bring in about 200,000 yen (\$1,600) a month for his family after the loan payments for their construction are deducted.

"I thought I could contribute to the creation of a nuclear-free world through the renewable energy business," Onuma said.

He added that he became even more motivated to create a nuclear-free society in Japan after his two children were born while the family was living as evacuees.

Meanwhile, Futaba town officials now plan to remove the brittle signboard later this year at the earliest and preserve it elsewhere.

Onuma has advocated preserving the overhead signboard as is to serve as a reminder of the devastating effects of the nuclear disaster as a "negative legacy."

August 20, 2015

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Hiroshima peace stone in Kazakhstan

August 29, 2015

Kazakhstan welcomes Hiroshima peace stone at antinuclear rally

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20150829p2g00m0dm064000c.html>

SEMEY, Kazakhstan (Kyodo) -- Kazakhstan, a strategically important Central Asian country sharing borders with Russia and China, received a stone from the 1945 U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima from a nonprofit Japanese group on Saturday during an international gathering against nuclear testing. East Kazakhstan Deputy Gov. Omar Zhaksylyk received the stone, engraved with an image of the Buddhist goddess of mercy, from Michio Umemoto, head of the Stone for Peace Association of Hiroshima, during a ceremony in Semey's peace park attended by several thousand people.

Semey was previously home to the Semipalatinsk test site, where more than 450 nuclear tests were carried out during the Soviet Union-era.

The deputy governor said in accepting the stone that Kazakhs' thoughts are with the Japanese people over the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 70th anniversary of the wartime devastation. He expressed Kazakhstan's appreciation for Japanese aid for a local rehabilitation center for radiation victims.

Umemoto said in a speech his group appreciates President Nursultan Nazarbayev for agreeing to accept the stone, and expressed hope that solidarity among recipient countries of the stone as a common symbol of peace will be strengthened.

Japanese Ambassador Masayoshi Kamohara, saying Japan and Kazakhstan are close partners for the abolition of nuclear weapons and nuclear nonproliferation, noted that the two countries will co-chair the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in New York in September.

More than 100 countries have so far received or agreed to receive the stones, which also have the English words "From Hiroshima" engraved on them since the start of the donation campaign in 1991.

The granite stones are about 50 centimeters square and weigh about 50 kilograms. They are some of the paving stones for Hiroshima streetcar tracks that were just 200 meters from ground zero.

August 29, 2015 (Mainichi Japan)

Miyagi residents: "Get lost!"



Residents in the town of Kami, Miyagi Prefecture, including Mayor Hirobumi Inomata (far left), protest a visit by the Environment Ministry officials trying to survey a candidate site in the town for a nuclear waste disposal facility on Monday. | KYODO

National

Miyagi residents physically block officials from surveying proposed nuke waste dump sites

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/01/national/residents-proposed-miyagi-nuke-waste-dump-venues-block-environment-ministry-officials-survey/#.VeaVzJfwmid>

Kyodo

SENDAI – Residents of three Miyagi Prefecture towns selected as candidate sites for hosting a permanent nuclear waste disposal facility barred the entry Monday of Environment Ministry officials seeking to carry out survey work.

People in the towns of Kami, Kurihara and Taiwa stalled the officials' plan to conduct geological surveys needed to determine which of the three locations would be best to host the site, which will permanently store radioactive waste that spewed from the Fukushima No. 1 power plant following the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake.

In the Tashirodake area of Kami on Monday morning, some 350 residents turned out in a light rain to protest the visit, holding banners and signs and yelling "Protect children's future!" and "Get lost!"

They also physically blocked the officials' access to the areas.

An Environment Ministry official meanwhile said the ministry will consider holding a town meeting in Kami in line with a request by the municipal government.

Plans to start ground surveys in the towns have been stalled since October, when the Environment Ministry began visiting them.

Miyagi Gov. Yoshihiro Murai criticized the residents' demonstrations, saying they should wage their battle against the nuclear dump site in the courts.

"They should open the land for a government survey without hesitating," Murai said. "If they disagree with the government plan, they should go to court."

Post-3/11 nuclear waste is being temporarily stored on farms around the prefecture and farmers hosting the waste are demanding the government build a proper storage site.

Tanohata: Women against nukes

September 2, 2015

INSIGHT: Women in Tohoku village refused to play host to nuclear plant

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/column/AJ201509020011>

By TOSHIHIDE UEDA/ Senior Staff Writer

TANOHATA, Iwate Prefecture--A sandy beach filling a gap in the cliffs and a badly damaged seawall came into view soon after I embarked on a sightseeing ship along the coastal area of this village, which has received the moniker of "Alps of the sea."

Tanohata, located along a northern stretch of the Sanriku coast, has a modest population of about 3,700. Its coastal area is known for its superb natural views, including the cliffs resulting from long-standing crustal deformation that uplifted the landmass by 200 meters, and a series of strange rocks and bizarre stones generated by erosion from the rough Pacific waves.

The 9-meter-high, 378-meter-long seawall, completed in 1969 to protect the village's Aketo district from tsunami, was overwhelmed by the wall of waves spawned by the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.

The giant blocks of concrete that lie on the sandy beach attest to the destructive force of the tsunami, which was more than 20 meters high. The quake and tsunami disaster left more than 30 people dead or missing in the village, including one life lost in the Aketo district, according to officials in the village government.

The village government has decided to preserve the seawall as a monument to the disaster. A plan was approved in February to have the central government cover the cost of associated building works.

"Objects built to save human lives have their own limits," said Norikatsu Watanabe, a senior official in the village government's policy promotion division who is involved in the monument project. "The destroyed seawall conveys that message."

'SPELLBOUND' BY NATURAL BEAUTY

History associated with the sandy beach and the seawall of Aketo is not just about the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The villagers were divided in 1981 over a plan to construct a nuclear power plant in Aketo.

"I will be positively promoting a plan to host a large-scale electric power source, including a nuclear plant," a chronicle of the Iwate prefectural assembly, published by the assembly, quotes Tadashi Nakamura, governor at the time, as telling the prefectural assembly in October of that year.

“There is a need to study suitable locations that could host a large-scale power source and promptly determine if there are locations suitable for hosting one.”

The prefectural government commissioned a Tokyo-based foundation to study suitable locations for hosting a nuclear plant and Aketo emerged as a “viable candidate.”

Hisa Iwami, 97, was a leading figure in the opposition movement at the time.

Iwami moved from Osaka during the early postwar period when she married the head priest of Hofukuji temple, which is located to the side of the Tanohata village government office. Tanohata at the time was a village without a doctor.

Iwami, who was a licensed nurse, was asked by the village government to “supervise public health in newly reclaimed settlements.” The village was dotted with 12 settlements developed after the war, which were home to more than 1,200 people.

Iwami obtained additional licensing as a public health nurse and commuted to newly developed settlements on foot in the capacity of a “development public health nurse.” She did everything to improve the health of the residents there, such as attending to childbirths, looking after the sick, giving advice on child care and giving cooking lessons.

“I didn’t find it hard to do,” Iwami said. “Tanohata has a sky, rivers and flowers, all authentic. I was spellbound by the beauty of that natural world.”

After retiring from her job at a health center, Iwami became the head of a liaison council for women’s associations in the village. Then came the proposal to host a nuclear plant.

“Most men in the village were in favor of the plant,” Iwami said.

The prefectural government emphasized that a sum of 3.15 billion yen (\$25 million) would be received if a nuclear plant were to be built. The village government at the time had an annual budget of about 2 billion yen. The offer must have looked tempting.

But women became united under Iwami, perhaps because they had shared their joys and sorrows with her in a quest for a more healthful life. The women remained opposed to the plan and called for “preserving clean nature.”

The prefectural government published the results of its study in March 1982. Tanohata was not among the four areas along the Sanriku coast that were deemed suitable for hosting a nuclear plant.

Nobody knows if that was the result of the opposition movement led by Iwami and others.

No nuclear plant has since been built in Iwate Prefecture, including in the four areas that were deemed suitable. The natural world that “spellbound” Iwami is a key tourism draw of the village.

SPIRIT OF PEASANT UPRISING

Tanohata was also the scene of a peasant uprising. People twice revolted against the Morioka feudal domain government in the mid-19th century during the late Edo Period (1603-1867). The uprising, known as Sanhei Ikki, went on to embroil the Sendai feudal domain government and succeeded in having most of the people's demands accepted.

Kichiro Hatakeyama, 77, who long worked for the village government, is a fifth-generation descendant of Tasuke Hatakeyama, a leader of the uprising. He said he vividly remembers Iwami from the days she was campaigning against a nuclear plant.

“Iwami and others were facing up seriously to the issue of the nuclear plant every day,” he said.

Hatakeyama said the starting point of the spirit of the uprising consisted of “courage, passion and unity.” Perhaps a legacy of that spirit was blooming in the minds of the village’s women at the time.

“It is not cash alone that counts,” Hatakeyama said. “We could be evacuated far away now if a nuclear plant had been built in Aketo.”

* * *

The author, based in Fukushima, wrote on other issues.
Physical sense helps preserve memories of 2011 triple disaster
Don't let nuclear disaster be forgotten like great Fukushima monk
Fondness for the 'earth' guided Fukushima couple displaced by nuke disaster
'Wishful thinking' of nuclear insiders must not be allowed to be reborn
Depopulated areas in Fukushima learned bitter lessons from dams
Utilities running a shell game in relying on nuclear power over renewable energy
Fukushima battling utilities' 'no more green energy' decision
In age of LEDs, utilities thinking in incandescent-bulb mode
Fukushima's micro-hydropower ambitions face challenges
Fukushima alive with seeds of industrial innovation
Radioactive pollution endangers cultures of Tohoku mountain communities
Abnormal changes in small birds and the role of science
Disaster-hit Tohoku communities search for a renewable way

"Tell the Prime Minister"

September 8, 2015

Sociologist documents post-3/11 anti-nuclear mass protests on film

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201509080009>



A scene from "Tell the Prime Minister," a documentary on anti-nuclear protest rallies

By HARUKA TAKASHIGE/ Staff Writer

In group-oriented Japan, where it has long been said the nail that sticks out is hammered down, mass protests involving people of all ages no longer come across as unusual.

Huge gatherings involving the elderly, mothers with children, salaried workers and students now feature regularly in front of the prime minister's office, the Diet building and other prominent venues.

The catharsis for this was the nation's worst nuclear accident in 2011, when the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant went into triple meltdown following the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

In the aftermath of the disaster, activists and citizens began hitting the streets to drum up support for a nuclear-free Japan.

What started as a trickle became a flood after a wave of rallies swept Japanese cities to become one of the nation's largest popular movements in decades.

A documentary on the phenomenon titled "Shusho Kantei no Mae de" (Tell the Prime Minister) will open in Tokyo and elsewhere from Sept. 19.

The 109-minute film focuses on rallies in 2011 and 2012, many of them in front of the prime minister's office. It also zooms in on the climax of those protests, a meeting between representatives of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a group of anti-nuclear organizations, and then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda of the Democratic Party of Japan in August 2012.

The film was funded and directed by Eiji Oguma, a professor of historical sociology at Tokyo's Keio University, who began taking part in anti-nuclear protest rallies a month after the Fukushima disaster unfolded.

Oguma realized that a new way of making a political statement had taken root in Japan, one that was almost nonexistent before.

"Protesters who assembled on their own created, after groping for a way to have their voices heard, a new political culture in which they stand on a sidewalk in front of the prime minister's office and shout out what is on their mind," said Oguma, 53. "People's intrinsic power was exposed in a crisis that leaves them feeling helpless with the traditional order."

Shunichi Ishizaki, 31, shot and edited the film.

The pair also used footage of demonstrations released on the Internet by participants.

The documentary contains scenes of a nervous-looking woman before a microphone giving her first speech in public in a quavering voice as well as the agitated expressions of other demonstrators who cannot contain anger despite their best efforts to do so. These powerful scenes convey the seriousness with which the protesters are making their demands.

It also features interviews with eight people, whose ages and social status differ.

Among them are a key figure who led massive rallies, a man who has a clerical job at a hospital, a Dutch woman who has lived in Japan for many years and a woman from Fukushima who was forced to flee her home and live as an evacuee due to high radiation levels in her community.

The documentary depicts how they felt after the nuclear accident and what drove them to participate in the mass protests.

Oguma directed the film out of a desire to leave a record on mass movements for future generations and audiences abroad.

The film screens with English subtitles.

The mass protests against nuclear power segued into civic demonstrations opposing legislation on protecting state secrets and national security.

Aki Okuda, a core member of Tokyo-based Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy-s, or SEALDs, hailed the participants of the anti-nuclear rallies for paving the way for his group to stage its own demonstrations after being given a sneak preview of the documentary.

SEALDs, set up in May, has been staging protest rallies against the security legislation on Fridays.

"Because we saw those mass protests, we are staging ours weekly in front of the Diet building," said

Okuda, a 23-year-old student at Meiji Gakuin University. "The younger generation who see our demonstrations may start something on their own and take theirs to the next stage of mass protests."

The film will screen at the theater of Uplink Co., a film distributor in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, starting from 10:30 a.m. between Sept. 19 and Sept. 25.

Show schedules from Sept. 26 at the Uplink theater and other venues will be available at

(<http://www.uplink.co.jp/kanteimae/>)

Protest at Sendai doors

September 10, 2015

Citizens protest Sendai commercial operation

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20150910_25.html

Sep. 10, 2015 - Updated 09:27 UTC+2

About 40 citizens held a rally on Thursday morning to protest the planned resumption of commercial operations of the Sendai nuclear plant in southwestern Japan.

They gathered at the front gate of the plant. Its No.1 reactor was expected to start commercial power generation later in the day.

Protestors carried banners and placards that read "No more nuclear power generation" and "Stop operation immediately." They said over loudspeakers that local residents don't agree with the restart.

A local campaigner who was taking part said she felt very indignant because the restart is taking place even though Fukushima Prefecture's reconstruction from the 2011 nuclear disaster remains incomplete.

She said she will continue to demand that the operator, Kyushu Electric Power Company, halt nuclear power generation.

Koizumi calls for national antinuke movement

September 13, 2015

Koizumi calls for national movement to lead fight against nuclear power

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201509130042>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Although he has no plans to return to national politics, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi tells the electorate not to lose hope in the campaign against nuclear power.

In an exclusive interview with The Asahi Shimbun in Tokyo, Koizumi called for a national movement to steer Japan away from nuclear plants.

"We should patiently continue to make efforts toward such a movement," he said on Sept. 9. "It is worth our efforts."

In the first interview Koizumi, 73, has granted to a media outlet since he stopped down as prime minister in September 2006, the theme was nuclear power.

The former prime minister denounced the Abe administration for pushing to rely on nuclear energy despite the 2011 Fukushima disaster, calling the recent restart of a nuclear power station "wrong."

"Japan will be all right even if all its nuclear power plants are abandoned right now," he said.

While in office from 2001 to 2006, Koizumi, of the Liberal Democratic Party, had promoted nuclear power generation in line with previous governments' policy.

Koizumi, however, had a dramatic change of heart in the wake of the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011, pointing to the potential danger of nuclear plants.

Last year, he actively campaigned in the Tokyo gubernatorial election for former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa on a primarily anti-nuclear platform. Hosokawa placed third in the race, behind winner Yoichi Masuzoe, who was backed by the ruling LDP.

Koizumi said the costs of bolstering the safety of nuclear power stations in quake-prone Japan would prove massive, citing powerful temblors in recent years such as the 2007 Niigata Chuetsu-oki Earthquake and 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.

"Nuclear power plants are not safe," he said. "If additional precautions are taken (to help prepare nuclear facilities for a giant quake), it will cost a huge amount of money."

The former prime minister also hit back at the government's argument that continuing with nuclear power will be a step in the right direction in terms of addressing global warming, given it does not emit carbon dioxide while generating electricity.

"Nuclear power is not clean at all," he said. "It is obvious that nuclear power also generates 'nuclear waste' (highly radioactive waste), which is more dangerous than carbon dioxide (that is spewed by thermal power plants)."

Koizumi criticized Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for "being influenced by promoters of nuclear power" and pressing ahead with the restart of a nuclear power plant.

The No. 1 reactor at Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture officially began commercial operations this month, the first in the nation in about two years.

Koizumi said he pressed Abe to move toward a nuclear-free Japan at a meeting between the current and former prime ministers in March.

"I said to him, 'Japan can close down all of its nuclear power stations only if you decide to do so and that you have a great chance,'" he said.

Koizumi was confident that Japan could persuade the United States, with which Tokyo has worked together in promoting nuclear energy, about its possible change of course.

"Washington will definitely accept it if Tokyo decides to go without nuclear power plants," he said, "because the United States is our ally and a democracy."

Koizumi, however, ruled out the possibility of a return to national politics in the future to rally political forces calling for the abolition of nuclear energy.

Still, he said while nuclear power generation has scarcely been an important issue in elections, he is confident that one day it will.

“Time will certainly come when the nuclear power issue will emerge as a key campaign issue in elections,” Koizumi said. “Candidates will be judged by their positions on nuclear power.”

(This article was written by Shinichi Sekine and Takashi Funakoshi.)

Naoto Kan: Nuclear uneconomical

September 16, 2015

Former PM Naoto Kan says nuclear power makes little economic sense, must end

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/16/national/former-pm-naoto-kan-says-nuclear-power-makes-little-economic-sense-must-end/#.VfmQX5fwlLN>

by Kazuaki Nagata
Staff Writer

Although the first reactor in Japan to be fired up in two years went online last month, former Prime Minister Naoto Kan said Wednesday that Japan needs to seek a nuclear-free path.

This is a lesson the country has learned from the Fukushima nuclear disaster, said Kan, who was prime minister when the Fukushima No. 1 plant was hit by a huge quake and tsunami on March 11, 2011.

“I’m absolutely sure that there will no longer be nuclear power by the end of this century. This is because it doesn’t make sense economically, and enough energy can be provided without it,” Kan said in a lecture to foreign residents in Tokyo.

While reactor 1 at the Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture was restarted in August, Japan has survived the past few summers without nuclear power, Kan said.

He added that although the current government is still promoting nuclear power, Japan has seen an increase of renewable energy since the Fukushima accident, especially from solar panels.

He said nuclear power was believed to be a cheap source of energy, but it is actually expensive, considering the cost of decommissioning and managing nuclear waste.

Kan also shared his experience of visiting Olkiluoto Nuclear Power Plant in Finland, where a final nuclear waste repository is being constructed. There, he was told it would take 100,000 years for the radiation of nuclear waste to descend to the same level of the uranium that exists in the natural environment.

Using nuclear power, Kan said, means increasing the amount of dangerous waste that will trouble future generations, adding that this is why other former prime ministers such as Junichiro Koizumi and Morihiro Hosokawa are also voicing their wish to end Japan’s dependence on it.

Japan Crushes Resistance to Restart

As the Japanese authorities restarted a nuclear reactor in Sendai, please find hereafter a link to a contribution to:

The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 13, Issue. 38, No. 1, September 21, 2015:

Japan Crushes Resistance to Restart Nuclear Power Plants

This paper delivers an analysis of the rationale behind the arguments (including economic arguments) mobilized by the Japanese authorities to legitimize their decision to restart the n°1 reactor in Sendai, under the sign of blackmail.

<http://www.japanfocus.org/-Thierry-Ribault/4374/article.html>

Japan Crushes Resistance to Restart Nuclear Power Plants

The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 13, Issue. 38, No. 1, September 21, 2015

Thierry Ribault

Summary: This article reviews the Abe administration's moves to crush opposition to nuclear power and restart the first nuclear reactors since the closure of all 54 nuclear power plants following the triple meltdown of March 11, 2011. The author punctures official claims of an economic crisis resulting from post-3.11 import of fossil fuels, the basis for the Abe restart program. Likewise, claims that preserving a share of the energy mix to nuclear power is essential and inescapable in order to avert or alleviate climate crisis. Finally, the author considers the implications of government policies for the possible creation of a Japanese nuclear weapons arsenal.

On August 11, 2015, the n°1 reactor at Sendai nuclear power plant, located in Kagoshima Prefecture in south-west Japan, was reactivated, and one month later Kyushu Electric Power inserted 157 fuel rod assemblies into the n°2 reactor planned to restart in mid-October¹. The Abe administration seeks to make this moment decisive in its energy strategy, insisting that nuclear power is “vital” for the future of the nation, in ways that recall statements between 1931 and 1945 that the invasion of Manchuria was also “vital” for the Empire. The pragmatic criticism levelled against such an approach with regard to the future of Japanese energy by the former Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro, who pointed out that Japan had managed to rebuild itself after the Second World War *without* Manchuria, had no impact. Koizumi has become one of the leading actors of the pro-renewable energy elite, which includes the pro-solar billionaire Son Masayoshi, CEO of Softbank. Adamant about its national-nuclearism, the Abe administration seems to adopt the rule that whatever is furthest from the truth is also what is most communicable. Such has been the case with the raising of the thresholds of unacceptability with regard to the radioactive contamination of both the population and nuclear workers. The administration has also denied the health effects associated with the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, despite the evidence of an epidemic of thyroid cancer. Moreover, evacuated people are being sent back into contaminated zones, a decision accompanied by a “risk communication” policy relayed and supported internationally by handpicked UN experts².

Naturally, there has been tension, including within the government itself, and notably from political and industrial groups that favour promotion of renewable energy, mainly biomass and hydroelectric power.

Even some of the most ardent defenders of nuclear power within parliament or government have changed their views to favour renewable energy. It is a (discreet) war of succession in terms of economic interests whose long-term outcomes are unforeseeable. It is certain, however, that with the reactivation of Sendai's n°1 reactor, Abe and his collaborators have won a battle in the *clique struggle*. They have achieved this largely thanks to a tool classically used in politics: blackmail. In this case, this blackmail has several facets: first, blackmail about the threat of trade deficit; second, about the threat of climate change; third, about the exploding costs of non-nuclear electricity and the threat of decreasing income for the giant power companies from nuclear power, and, finally, about the threat of an atomic bomb.

All the ingredients of the Abe administration's approach to the power plants were actually fully elaborated in the following passage extracted from the Prime Minister's response at the plenary session of the House of Councilors in January 31, 2013: «The Policy established by the former administration to halt the operation of all nuclear power plants by the 2030's lacks a concrete basis and has engendered anxiety and distrust among the municipalities that have accepted nuclear facilities and cooperated with the national government's energy policies, the international community, industry, and the remainder of the Japanese people. Therefore we will carry out a zero-based review of their strategy for energy and the environment and will establish a responsible energy policy which also ensures a stable supply of energy and reduces energy costs.»³

Thus, from the "zero-based review", to the energy cost reduction guarantee, the security connoted "stable supply", and the demagogic and manipulative argument according to which the Japanese people lost confidence and became anxious *because* "the policy established by the former administration to halt the operation of all nuclear power plants by the 2030's" lacked a "concrete basis", and not simply because of the explosion and the meltdown of three nuclear reactors that were supposed to be eternally safe, every single argument of the Abe administration is an inversion of the actual truth.

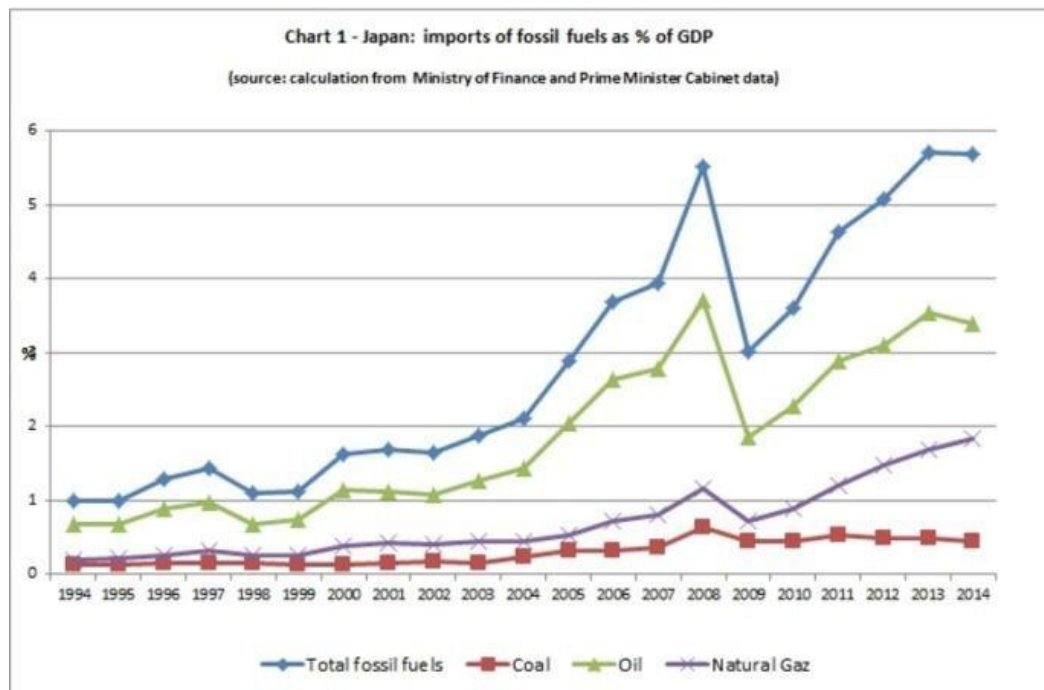
Let us examine in detail the content of each of these facets of the blackmail before drawing conclusions on the nature of the authoritarianism of the Abe administration on one hand, and the effectiveness of individual and collective action to fight this administration on the other.

1. The threat of trade deficit

In 2013, for the first time in three decades, the Japanese balance of trade was in deficit by a total of 11.5 billion yen. 7 billion of this was attributed to the relocation of Japanese industries to other parts of Asia – not connected with the Fukushima disaster – and 4 billion to the additional cost of petrol and gas to produce energy no longer supplied by nuclear power plants. However, from April 2015, the balance of trade was once again in surplus, with petrol purchases dropping by 51%, petroleum products by 38%, and liquefied natural gas by 12%.⁴ The following months were slightly negative, but the weaker yen policy of the Abe Administration (since December 2012) helped reassert the value of exports which substantially increased: in July 2015, the percent change from the same term in the preceding year was 7.6% for exports (of which machinery was 8%, electrical machinery 10.5%, transport equipment 10.4%), imports were -3.2% (of which -29% for mineral fuels), and the trade balance was -72.2%.⁵

Actually the growing share of imports of fossil fuels in the Japanese GDP is not new; indeed, it has been steady since the 1990s (Chart 1). The trend was halted in 2009, to restart in 2010, with a new peak in 2013 at a comparable level with that reached in 2008 (5.5%), but still lower than the levels reached during the oil shock of 1980 (6.6%). For petrol and coal, 2014 shows a reverse trend toward low levels, and even though we don't know what the future will be, according to METI, prices of liquefied natural gas could be halved between 2014 and 2015. The data made public for the first half of 2015 suggest an extension of the fall in fossil fuel imports against GDP to 3.9% (against 5.7% in 2014). Considering the

trade balance in the first semester of the year, the 2015 trade deficit could be four times lower than that of 2014.

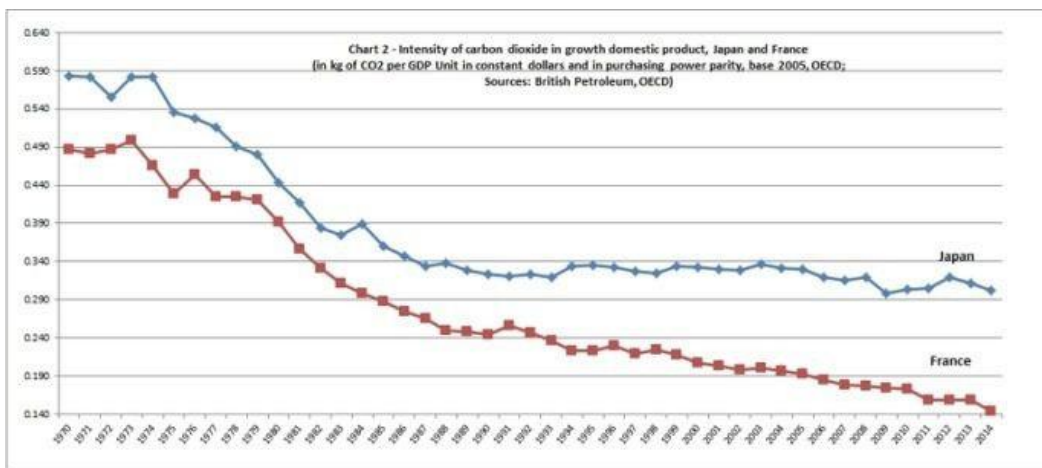


The results of a study by the energy economist Bernard Laponche in 2014⁶ confirm that the claim of a relationship between the termination of nuclear power and expansion of the Japanese trade deficit is groundless. According to Laponche, if “the energy bill (net import of fossil fuels) truly increased 46% between 2010 and 2013, 6% of this hike is due to changes in the energy system, namely the fall of nuclear electricity production, while 40% is due to the rise in imported fuels, particularly petrol, whose rising international price was unrelated to the fall in nuclear power production in Japan” (p.61).

Our first conclusion then is the following: Stopping the use of nuclear power in the wake of the Fukushima disaster did not have the expected disastrous impact on the Japanese balance of trade, and the loudly proclaimed “wealth drain” did not occur.

2. The threat of climate change

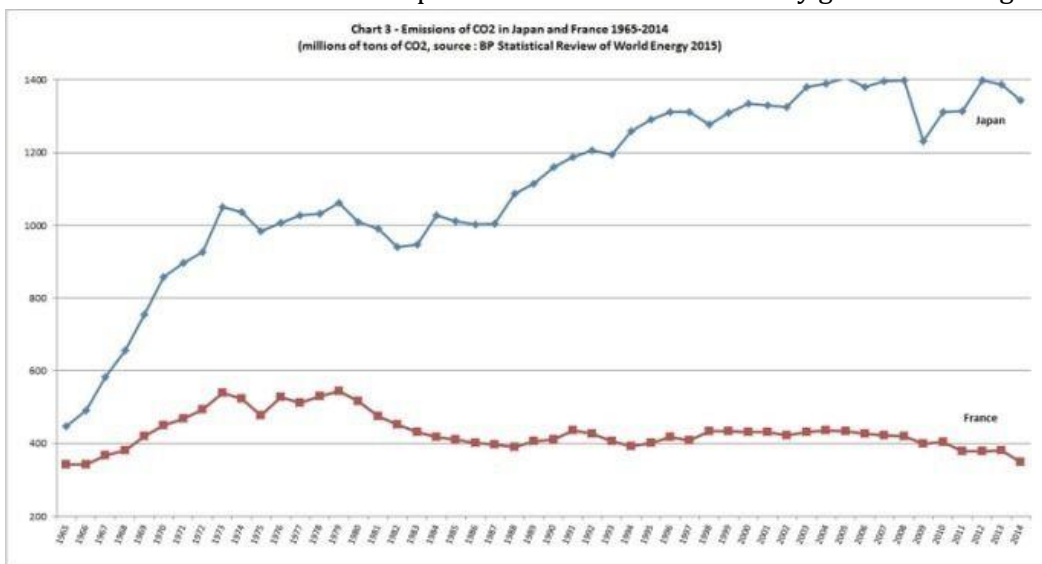
Since 2007-08, the intensity of Japanese GDP in carbon dioxide has been 1.8 to 2 times higher than in France, compared with 1.2 times during the 1970’s (Chart. 2). In the long run, this intensity has been falling in both countries, with some temporary reverses. This was the case in 1973, 1984, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2012 in Japan, and in 1973, 1976, 1991, 1996, 1998 and 2003 in France. In Japan, CO2 intensity resumed its long-term fall in 2013 and 2014. Thus, this was not Japan’s first re-intensification in carbon dioxide emissions, and the shut down of nuclear power was just one element affecting a long term trajectory of declining CO2 intensity.



On the other hand, with few brief exceptions, the absolute value of CO2 emissions has not stopped increasing in Japan since the 1950s (Chart 3). Not until 2009, right after the 2008 “Lehman shock,” did a significant decrease occur, before recovering to cruising speed in 2010. A new peak was reached in 2012, before the fall in 2013 and 2014.

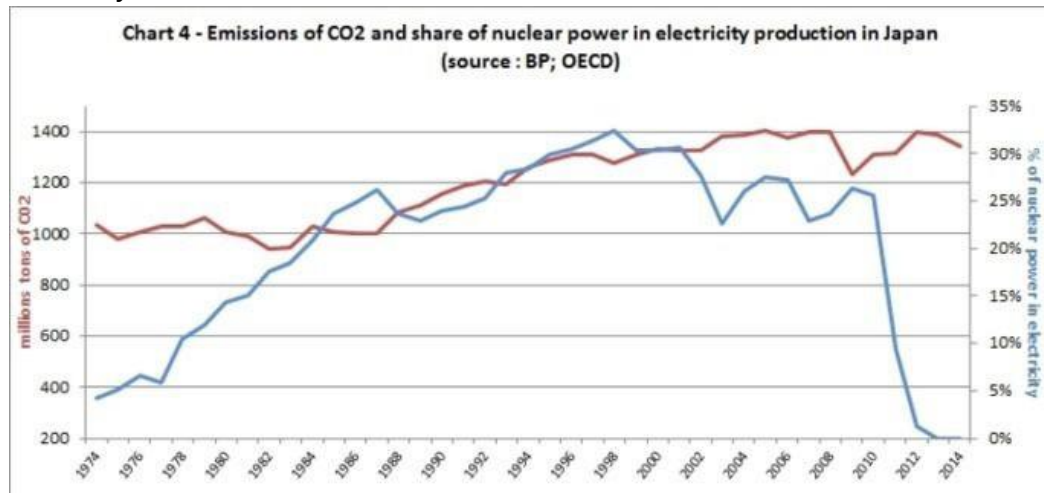
In France, for more than the last three decades, the absolute level of carbon dioxide emissions remained roughly constant, even higher than the level reached at the end of the 1950s, while the intensity of carbon in GDP fell steadily from 1974.

Thus, if the oil shocks did tend to slow down CO2 emissions in the short run, in countries like Japan and France where production is highly energy intensive, the nuclear shock did keep total emissions, in absolute value, on a quasi-continuous ascending curve, despite promises to reduce emissions in both countries on the basis of nuclear power in a world threatened by global warming.



Despite a significant increase in the use of fossil fuels, the total amount of CO2 emissions in Japan did not increase after the Fukushima disaster at the speed estimated by experts and by ardent nuclear defenders: energy savings kicking in, compensating for 28% of the nuclear electricity fall between 2011 and 2014, and the increased use of renewable energy are the two main factors behind this development. Thus, although coal and oil consumption rose after 2010, they did not reach pre-2008 crisis levels. CO2 emissions in Japan, of which 40% are related to the production of electricity, maintained an identical trajectory before and after the Fukushima disaster. And, from 2012, they returned to their 2002–2008 level, that is about 1.4 billion tonnes of CO2.

The disaster did not therefore precipitate Japan into a sudden and unstoppable increase in carbon dioxide emissions; rather it reinforced the upward trend experienced prior to the disaster, from the period of “recovery” that followed the 2008 crisis.



To sum up, the fall in the share of nuclear power in total electricity production in Japan in 2011 (12%) and 2012 (1%), did not lead to a proportional rise in carbon dioxide emissions (Chart 4). On the contrary, during the recent period, a drop in CO2 emissions has been observed: 0.9% in 2013, 3.1% in 2014. Finally, it can be noted that the increase in Japanese nuclear power plants between the 1960s and the 1970s coincided with one of the largest increases in CO2 emissions in the country – the volume increasing by 2.4 times between 1965 and 1973 against 1.3 times between 1973 and 2014. Several periods will follow where the growth of the nuclear power share into electricity production will go with the growth of CO2 emissions, particularly 1974-1978, 1982-1984, 1990-1997, 1999-2001, 2003-2006 and 2007-2008.

Therefore, our second conclusion is that, in the long term, the development of nuclear power never halted the almost uninterrupted increase in Japanese carbon emissions. In an economic system founded on a double energy dependency, the growth in both nuclear power's share of electricity production and CO2 emissions may run in parallel and articulate with each other rather than the opposite, contrary to what one might anticipate.

3. The threat of exploding prices and costs of non-nuclear electricity

Between 2009 and 2014, electricity prices for Japanese households and small and medium size enterprises, and for big companies rose respectively by 24.4% and 35.6% (table 1). This increase has been presented by the government as a second disaster following the triple earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown of March 2011. However, once again, to impute such price increases to the nuclear power stoppage is to forget the past, since the price levels reached in the early 1990's were equivalent to current levels which are being touted as a “record”. It also involves correlating in an unsound way the rise in electricity prices and the nuclear power stoppage while, when viewed in comparison with France, where the share of nuclear power in electricity production is between 75% and 77%, a country giving priority to nuclear power is also put at risk of high electricity price hikes: between 2009 and 2014 electricity prices in France grew respectively 44.6% for households and small and medium size enterprises, and 40% for big companies, that is, a greater increase than in Japan.

Table 1 – Comparative prices of electricity in current €/kWh including VAT
(sources: METI, Eurostat (1) et (2))

	Households and SME		Large enterprises	
	Japan	France	Japan	France*
2009	14.89	12.10	10.10	6.50
2014	18.53	17.50	13.70	9.10
Growth 2009-2014	24.4%	44.6%	35.6%	40.0%
* excluding VAT				

According to the projection released by Japan's Ministry of Industry in April 2015, nuclear power will be produced at a cost of 10.1 yen per kilowatt-hour in 2030 against 8.9 yen in 2011. This will make nuclear energy the least expensive source of energy compared to coal (12.2 yen), gas (13.4 yen) and renewable energy (solar: between 12.7 and 15.5 yen; wind: between 13.9 and 21.9 yen).⁷ The estimate of the cost of nuclear energy takes into account compensation for accidents, aid to local governments and costs related to the security of nuclear plants. The costs incurred by a nuclear accident have been greatly reduced by government experts to take into account the introduction of security standards that are much stricter and more reliable than those in place before the Fukushima disaster. According to their calculations, the authorities have thus halved the likelihood of a major accident.

Moreover, the estimated cost of the nuclear kilowatt-hour is based on the statements of investors in security made by electricity companies. However, shortly after publication of the figures, these companies revealed that their actual expenses would be two and a half times higher than those declared 30 months earlier and would reach at least 2.4 trillion yen.⁸

Yet it is on the basis of these cost estimates that the Japanese "energy mix" for electricity production by 2030 was defined in April: 20% to 22% for nuclear power – which implies either overturning the existing rule on shutting down reactors after 40 years of use or the building of new reactors – and 22% to 24% for renewable energy.⁹

As we will see below, by making the energy issue a *security* issue, the government legitimizes the preservation of a large share of nuclear power in Japan's energy mix. Particularly it allows justification of an arbitrary increase in the energy self-sufficiency rate from 6% now to 24% in fiscal 2030. Since this energy self-sufficiency rate is structurally defined as the share of renewables *and* of nuclear energies in the total primary energy supply, reaching the 24% target means, *mechanically*, to increase the share of nuclear power to 11% of total primary energy supply, with the balance (13%) coming from renewables largely insufficient to compensate by themselves for the decrease of fossil fuels. In other words, the self-sufficiency rate target is nothing but a tailored-made guarantee that nuclear power will be assured a substantial share in the Japanese energy mix for the coming decades. Abe's renewable energies policy appears to be simply a back up to legitimize this necessity under the cover of «clean» energy to save the climate, and «independant» energy to save the nation's sovereignty from foreign fossil fuels providers. According to a study by the Mitsubishi Research Institute conducted in December 2014 for the Ministry of Environment, by 2030, approximately 31% of Japan's electricity production could be generated in the form of renewable energy, including solar, wind, geothermal and hydroelectric power, as opposed to approximately 2% in 2013 (excluding large hydro)¹⁰. The Ministry considers that the guaranteed feed-in tariffs of renewable energy could drop sharply and be maintained, even with a significant production of renewable energy, to a level below that estimated by METI. Moreover, the substitution of renewable energy for fossil fuels could save between 11 and 25 trillion yen by 2030. However, during the

development of its energy plan, METI neither took these figures nor studies into account; their findings have also gone unheeded.¹¹

Thus, our third conclusion: first, there is no correlation between the rise in electricity prices and the nuclear power stoppage; second, the cost estimates of the different energy sources made by the Japanese government have been arbitrarily distorted to make a false case for the economics of nuclear power.

4. The threat of decreased income from nuclear power

In addition to its unconditional support for the reactivation of nuclear power plants, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) is moving to cut back on subsidies to local governments with idle nuclear plants.

Under the current system, local governments receive grants whose amounts depend on the operational performance of their reactors during the two preceding fiscal years. From 2013, municipalities have received grants based on an across the board deemed operational rate of 81% while all reactors were suspended for safety inspections in the wake of the 2011 disaster. This rate corresponds to the full operational rate except for the regular inspection period once every 13 months. Starting in 2016, the reference period will be reduced to one and a half years. Unless the reactors concerned are reactivated, the operational rate will be reduced to the rate before the March 11, 2011 disaster; that is, 70% on average. According to METI, this adjustment whose goal is clearly to press for reactivation, is “aimed at ensuring fairness” with regard to municipalities which have already reactivated their nuclear reactors. *Consequently, in municipalities such as Mihama in Fukui prefecture – at the heart of what is referred to as the “Nuclear Ginza” – where 40% of tax revenues are attributable to nuclear power and where subsidies will be halved owing to the dismantling of several reactors -- politicians are under pressure to support the reactivation of reactors in their territory.*

5. The (real) threat of atomic bombs

Owing to the fact that its nuclear fuel recycling programme has shut down and its plutonium stockpile accumulation continues to cause international concern, Japan has been under “pressure” – to the extent possible – to use its fuel reserves in its reactors. Thus, US Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Rose Gottemoeller, recently told journalists that Japan should complete its pending fuel recycling programme and burn plutonium as a fuel called MOX in its reactors: “If there is going to be a plutonium reprocessing program, the flip side of it is that there has to be a very vigorous MOX program and that the MOX actually has to be burned in power plants.”¹²

The question remains, however, whether Japan can restart the 18 reactors needed to burn the plutonium it holds, and specifically whether the Rokkasho reprocessing plant can actually start up.

The desire to guarantee legitimacy to the existence of a centre for storage, plutonium extraction and reprocessing and MOX production at Rokkasho, located in northern Japan, is not new. Indeed, this reprocessing chain, built in partnership with AREVA from 1993, has never become operational and its fuel storage capacity will soon be saturated: 2834 tonnes of fuel are now in the factory’s pools, 90% of the available capacity on the site. Using Rokkasho’s infrastructure is the sole action that could guarantee the sustainability of this 20 billion euro gem whose dismantling costs are estimated at an additional 80 billion euros. This is taking place within a context in which there is a sharp decline in Japanese demand for plutonium used in breeder reactors (the Monju reactor has experienced a series of accidents and has produced electricity for only one hour over the last 20 years) and for MOX in conventional reactors. Japan currently holds 157 tonnes of plutonium, of which 100 tonnes are located in nuclear power plants. The remaining 57 tonnes have been shipped to reprocessing plants and 45 tonnes have been separated (35 tonnes are stored in France and the UK). These can make 5000 nuclear bombs. Rokkasho’s

reprocessing capacity could enable the annual production of eight tons of separated plutonium, sufficient to make 1000 atomic bombs.

The question that nobody asks, but that we believe requires attention is thus: beyond its civilian use, does Japan intend to make a non-civilian use of its plutonium reprocessing and production plant?

The amendment to the “Atomic Energy Basic Law” that was quietly passed on June 20 2012 stated that, henceforth, *“the nuclear energy policy of Japan has to contribute to national security”*, sheds light on this issue. Further light is shed by the more recent vote on security laws, extending the possibility for intervention of self-defense forces in conflicts abroad in the name of strengthening the Japan–US alliance in matters of security. Defense minister Gen Nakatani thus recently acknowledged that these laws paved the way for a “theoretical possibility” for Japan to transport nuclear weapons during logistical operations. However, he reiterated that the country would not engage in this type of intervention given the “non-nuclear principles” to which Japan has been committed.¹³

We noted, in a paper written in October 2012, that: *“this new context is not characterized by Japan’s technological capacity to build a nuclear weapon within a limited period, but rather by the fact that, drawing on the opportunity for the reform of its Nuclear Regulation Authority in the wake of the Fukushima disaster, Japan is establishing a legal framework adequate for the recognition and activation of such capacity. The next step could be a reform of Article 9 of the constitution, consistent with the bigger political role that the United States intends to see Japan play in Asia, notably with regard to China. Although the development of Japanese military nuclear reactors is only a mere potentiality, it provides a strong argument to its neighbors who also aspire to “nuclear sovereignty”, resulting in the escalated accumulation of nuclear weapons.”*¹⁴ Three years later, it is no longer necessary to evoke the likely scenario. Indeed, the Japanese constitution has been revised by Abe administration fiat challenging the pacifist stance on which Article 9 was premised. The considerable resistance to this revision has had little impact on the political regime that some do not hesitate to describe as a “dictatorship”.

According to Hasebe Yasuo of Waseda University, one of the three constitutional experts invited in June by the Japanese parliament to speak on the constitutionality of security laws, the latter “undermine legal stability”. Hasebe also pointed out that, “There is this enormous distance that is hardly understandable from a commonsense point of view between the words and terms in the security bills that are seemingly limiting the conditions for use of force.”

He also questioned the remarks made by the Vice President of the Liberal Democratic Party, Masahiro Komura that “constitutional scholars never fail to stick to the words in Article 9 of the Constitution”. “Does this mean”, asked Hasebe, “that Mr. Komura is going to say that he wants to wield political power without sticking to the Constitution? That is fairly scary.”¹⁵

Reacting to a formulation in the safety laws which states that “the intentions, capability and scale of the aggressor will be taken into comprehensive consideration before a decision is made over whether to allow for use of force” Kobayashi Setsu of Keio University, another constitutional expert, noted that “essentially, the statement is urging the public to give carte blanche to the government over the operation of the military by leaving everything to chance. It is the idea of a dictatorship.”

This seems to have been unwittingly confirmed by Nishi Osamu, an expert from Komazawa University and member of the group of private advisers to the Prime Minister who contributed to the formulation of the security laws. Nishi argued that “there is no small number of people who deem the bills to be constitutional”, adding that “Constitutional debate is not about deciding something by majority vote.”

A group of Japanese parliamentarians recently revealed that even before debate on the details of the security bills inside the ruling coalition took place, meetings were held in December 2014 in the United States between Japanese representatives and US military forces in which Kawano Katsutoshi, chief of staff

of the Self-Defense Forces Joint Staff, stated that “the new security legislation would be ready by the summer of 2015” and that the construction of a new military base to replace U.S Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa Prefecture was considered under “a positive view.” 16

Thus, our fifth conclusion is that the articulation between civil nuclear power and military nuclear power sheds some light on why, with 53% of Japanese opposing the security laws,17 these laws were nonetheless passed into law, and why, with 57% against reactivation of the Sendai nuclear plant,18 reactor n°1 has nonetheless been reactivated.

Conclusion

It is therefore under the banner of blackmail that the Abe administration has reactivated the n°1 reactor at Sendai nuclear power plant. In Japan as elsewhere, by trying so much to present nuclear power as the Swiss army knife of all good public energy policy – anti-CO2 emissions and anti-global warming, anti-increases in electricity prices and costs hikes, anti-trade balance disequilibrium and anti-energy dependency – planners refuse to adapt reality to the truth, willfully choosing to shape the latter on the image of the former, constantly presented as immutable in order to ensure full exercise of authority. In so doing, they submit everyone to the tyranny of threats.

“We need the security bills to avert war”,19 Abe declared in front of the *hibakusha* – the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August. This is just one additional element in the *national operation to secure* – through fraudulent means as well as by threatening violence – and with the consent of victims, renunciation of all forms of personal or collective action that could thwart the state’s authoritarianism. In his speech on August 6 on the occasion of the ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing –for the first time since his ascension to power – Prime Minister Abe made no mention of the “three non-nuclear principles” that ban the production, possession and import of nuclear weapons into Japanese territory.

While representatives of citizens’ associations and bomb victims have expressed their “hope that this year will not become a turning point towards war”, others have not failed to draw attention to their “hope for the realisation of a world free of nuclear weapons.”20

It is questionable, however, whether such “hopes”, like those of the 160 Satsumasendai demonstrators who opposed the reactivation of reactor n°1 – supported on the occasion by former Prime Minister Kan Naoto, a convert to anti-nuclearism since 2011 – and those of the valiant owners of the five cars which momentarily blocked the entrance to the power plant, have the ability to significantly alter the political orientations we have outlined above.

In an interview on “the state of urgency and legitimate defence” that took place a year after the Chernobyl disaster, Günther Anders raised an interesting question: “what lies at the core of hope? Is it the belief that things will get better?” His response is as true today as it was then: “we must not raise hope, we must prevent it. For no one acts through hope. All those who hope abandon improvement to another entity.”21 The time has come to speak of reprehensible actions in the nuclear field, and having hope will no longer be an alibi. In the atomic age, hope ceased to be virtuous. If to struggle is to have eyes open, it is not hope which can sustain the ability to resist in a padlocked situation, but the right to exercise legitimate self-defense against nuclear violence.

Hope tends to be “synonymous with cowardice” and it is from their intimate knowledge of this identity that nuclear blackmailers derive their force. For as long as their opponents remain hopeful, they will remain frighteningly harmless.

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Notes

1 Mainichi, September 11 2015.

2 While, unofficially, the radiation exposure limit has been raised for the population, contaminated zones under 20 mSv a year having been progressively reopened to the public since April 2011, the last being the town of Nahara in Fukushima Prefecture where 7,400 residents have been “allowed” to return home permanently in early August (Asahi, June 17 2015), Japanese nuclear plant workers will officially also “be allowed to be exposed” to more than twice the current level of radiation in emergency situations, according to the Nuclear Regulation Authority’s Radiation Council. The radiation council announced in a report released July 30, that their radiation exposure limit will be raised from the current 100 mSv to 250 mSv in emergencies (Mainichi, June 17 2015).

As for risk communication, it is defined by UNSCEAR experts as the «interactive exchange of information and opinions concerning risks» (p.15). More precisely: “Risk communication is a key component of the risk analysis process, and is linked closely to risk assessment and risk management. Proactive risk communication, coupled with public involvement in the remedial process, is critical to the success of any remedial activity. Addressing public health concerns is a major communication challenge. The building blocks of an effective risk communication strategy are trust, transparency, ethics, technical accuracy, values, credibility and expression of caring. Different types of messages may be more – or less – suitable for different audiences (e.g. the general public, policy-makers, decision-makers, the mass media). Fears and perceptions need to be addressed – even if they are not commensurate with the actual risks. It is of utmost importance to prevent reactions that themselves carry risk (such as self-administration of potassium iodide), to allay unnecessary fears (such as avoidance of breastfeeding because of health fears), and to promote healthy coping mechanisms (such as social solidarity)” (*Health risk assessment from the nuclear accident after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami based on a preliminary dose estimation*, World Health Organization 2013, p.87.) In practical terms, risk communication policy in the Fukushima context consists in educating people to the nuclear culture and to encourage everyone to get used to a contaminated environment through educational workshops on radioactivity and cancer at schools, the dissemination of handbooks teaching how to manage life in a contaminated environment, and TV commercial campaigns on the virtues of fresh products from the contaminated areas.

As for the health effects of the Fukushima disaster, while experts from the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) have been emphasizing since March 2011 that in Fukushima as in Chernobyl, the social and psychological impacts on health would be greater than the direct effects of radiation, they have also been asserting that “Radiation exposure following the nuclear accident at Fukushima-Daiichi did not cause any immediate health effects” and that “It is unlikely to be able to attribute any health effects in the future among the general public and the vast majority of workers” as was concluded during the 60th session of the Vienna-based UNSCEAR, on May 2013. A more recent report from IAEA reaffirmed the same stance, asserting that, “Because the reported thyroid doses attributable to

the accident were generally low, an increase in childhood thyroid cancer attributable to the accident is unlikely" (...) "However, uncertainties remain concerning the thyroid equivalent doses incurred by children immediately after the accident". According to the report, those uncertainties are largely due to a lack of reliable personal radiation monitoring data immediately after the disaster started, when radioactive iodine and other radioactive materials were spewed into the environment (Japan Times September 1st 2015).

Echoing such prophecy and uncertainty based science, the Fukushima Medical University Health Survey identified 98 residents 18 years old and younger diagnosed with thyroid cancer and 14 others diagnosed with possible thyroid cancer, but asserts that no causality relation with the Fukushima accident can be established (Mainichi, September 1st 2015). A child in Fukushima Prefecture has been diagnosed with thyroid cancer in the latest health survey, which began in April 2014, and seven others are also suspected of having thyroid cancer but have not received a definitive diagnosis. They all tested negative in the first survey. "Despite the new results, I don't think we need to change our previous view" that they were not affected by radiation, said Hokuto Hoshi, who heads the panel (Japan Times, February 13 2015).

3 Source: Energy White Paper 2013, Outline June 2013, Agency for Natural Resources and Energy.

4 Le Monde, April 22, 2015.

5 Ministry of Finance, July 2015.

6 Les cahiers de Global Chance, n°36 novembre 2014.

7 Asahi, April 28, 2015.

8 Asahi, July 10, 2015.

9 Asahi, April 29, 2015.

10 The first proposed strategy report by the *Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies* (ISEP) after 3.11 for Japan's mid to long term reorganization of domestic energy was titled "unplanned electricity stoppage to strategically shift energy". It was released in March 2011. The strategy involves a shift towards a diversified energy policy to stabilize energy supply, work towards energy self-sufficiency, and curb global warming. The report sets a goal of reaching 30% renewable power generation by 2020 and 100% by 2050 (<http://www.isep.or.jp/en>).

11 Mainichi, February 21, 2015.

12 Mainichi, August 10, 2015.

13 Mainichi, August 5, 2015.

14 Reporterre, October 2, 2012.

15 Mainichi, June 10, 2015.

16 Mainichi, September 3, 2015.

17 Mainichi, May 25, 2015.

18 Mainichi, August 10, 2015.

19 Mainichi, August 11, 2015.

20 Mainichi, August 11, 2015.

21 Günther Anders, *La violence: oui ou non. Une discussion nécessaire*, Éditions Fario, Paris, 2014, p.30.

CNIC: 4 decades of spreading information on nukes

October 2, 2015

Atomic CNIC fetes 40 years tracking nuclear safety issues

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/02/national/atomic-foe-cnic-fetes-40-years-tracking-nuclear-safety-issues/#.Vg5WtJfwmic>

by Keiji Hirano

Kyodo

A private organization lobbying to phase out atomic power is celebrating four decades of efforts to encourage public discourse and self-education about nuclear issues, as concern grows over reactor restarts just four years after the Fukushima meltdowns.

The Citizens' Nuclear Information Center was launched in September 1975 at a time when people were raising their voices against nuclear power projects. Since then, Tokyo-based CNIC has gathered and analyzed related information to provide it to the public through its newsletters and website, while training "citizen scientists" who are capable of addressing nuclear issues from the perspective of ordinary people.

"I believe we should not depend on nuclear technologies that deprive us of our right to life," said Yukio Yamaguchi, co-director of the nonprofit organization. "We cannot achieve (a nonnuclear society), however, by merely saying 'No' to them.

"The CNIC has made efforts to encourage people to be sufficiently informed about nuclear-related issues so they can debate with authorities and utility officials as equals," said Yamaguchi, a former lecturer at the University of Tokyo.

"We need to realize democracy in the field of nuclear power so we ourselves can be involved in the decision-making process over nuclear policies, rather than leaving it entirely (up) to experts," he added. CNIC's latest monthly newsletter carries a report by lawyer Yuichi Kaido, who aided efforts to prosecute former executives of Tokyo Electric Power Co. over the March 2011 triple reactor meltdown at its Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

An independent judicial panel of citizens reached a decision in July that mandates that three former Tepco executives be charged with professional negligence for their handling of the worst nuclear crisis since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

"I expect hidden aspects of the Fukushima disaster to be unveiled during the upcoming open court," Kaido said in the report.

The 20-page newsletter also provides a commentary on a Japan-U.S. atomic energy agreement, as well as a report about a corporate acquisition involving a French nuclear power company.

Yamaguchi, who holds a doctorate in engineering, said it is epoch-making that the Fukui District Court issued an injunction in April to block the restart of two reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama plant. The court said it could not see credible evidence in the utility's assumptions on earthquake risks and noted that the move to restart the units posed an "imminent danger" to residents near the plant.

"The decision was reached through debates involving the residents, nuclear power generation advocates and judges," he said. "It represented the residents' strong will to join the decision-making even in the scientific areas."

The CNIC also houses around 20,000 documents on nuclear issues, serving as a public archive. Its more than ¥50 million in annual operating costs are financed mostly by membership fees.

The Fukushima disaster kicked off an extremely busy period for the CNIC staff.

"While gathering information on Fukushima through various channels, we received a number of requests from all over Japan to attend study sessions as lecturers," Yamaguchi said.

Inquiries also came from abroad, “and we tried as hard as possible to provide accurate information to the public in an understandable way,” he said.

The CNIC’s base of activities was established by former Director Jinzaburo Takagi, Yamaguchi said. Takagi, a nuclear scientist, joined CNIC for its launch after withdrawing from an associate professorship at Tokyo Metropolitan University. He died of cancer in October 2000 at the age of 62.

Takagi closely studied the 1979 Three Mile Island accident in the United States, the Chernobyl disaster and Japan’s nuclear problems and issued his findings and policy proposals through magazine articles and books.

In 1997, acting as a “citizen scientist,” Takagi received the Right Livelihood Award, known as the “Alternative Nobel Prize,” for “serving to alert the world to the unparalleled dangers of plutonium to human life.”

“Mr. Takagi’s efforts expanded CNIC’s capabilities and led to gaining the public’s trust (in) this organization,” Yamaguchi said of his compatriot, who participated with him in the campaign to support farmers whose land was seized during the state-sponsored project to build Narita airport.

Yamaguchi said the nuclear power industry only creates problems for others.

“Nuclear power generation is a system to exact tolls on others,” including the workers who are exposed to radiation and the municipalities that host the plants. Future generations may also be burdened with the unresolved issue of nuclear waste disposal, which involves hazardous elements with long half-lives, he added.

Satoshi Kamata, a freelance journalist who has covered nuclear issues for decades, was one of the first subscribers to the CNIC newsletter.

“People involved in the anti-nuclear plant movement in each region have been connected and have exchanged information through the CNIC,” he said. “I expect it to continue working as a center for such networks.”

Against Abe's security and energy policies

October 3, 2015

Protests continue against Abe administration policies

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201510030029



Participants make their position clear at a protest gathering held Oct. 2 in Tokyo's Hibiya Park. (Wataru Sekita)

By RYOSUKE YAMAMOTO/ Staff Writer

Protesters rallied in a central Tokyo park Oct. 2 to express opposition to policies pushed by the Abe administration.

An estimated 3,000 people gathered at an open-air concert space in Hibiya Park in Chiyoda Ward to hear speeches. Audience members held up signs that said "Abe administration No."

The rally was held to protest recently enacted security legislation that will drastically change the overseas role of Japan's Self-Defense Forces, **as well as policies on restarting nuclear power plants after the 2011 Fukushima disaster and the U.S. bases issue in Okinawa.**

After the gathering, participants marched through the nearby Ginza and Shinbashi districts.

Koichi Nakano, a professor of comparative politics at Sophia University in Tokyo who has been critical of the Abe administration, said: "When politicians who are nothing more than our representatives go out of control, the thing to do in a democracy is to stand up in protest. Let us do our best to bring about a politics that fosters respect for the individual."

Yasumasa Chiba, 24, a member of Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy-s, or SEALDs, which has organized protest meetings against the security legislation, said, "The greatest asset we have received is the change in the consciousness of the general public that decided to quit remaining silent."

Kiyoko Shimizu, 73, of Tokyo's Machida city who participated after she attended a concert of classical music, said, "I want to express my intention as much as possible **for the sake of my children and grandchildren's generations.**"

Has Taro Kono traded his beliefs for glory?

October 8, 2015

Nuclear opponents in a tizzy over Kono's appointment to Cabinet

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201510080034

By SHINICHI SEKINE/ Staff Writer

The appointment of maverick lawmaker Taro Kono to a Cabinet post on Oct. 7 had opponents of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's nuclear policies wondering if their champion had bartered his beliefs for political glory.

The 52-year-old former chief of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's Administrative Reform Promotion Headquarters has been a vocal critic of Abe's nuclear policy.

His appointment as chairman of the National Public Safety Commission and minister in charge of administrative reform and disaster management took many people by surprise.

Kono is the son of Yohei Kono, a former president of the LDP and chief Cabinet secretary, who was known for his liberal and pacifist principles.

While he has frequently lashed out at Abe's moves to restart nuclear reactors to sustain the economy, Kono refrained from raising the issue during a news conference after the inaugural Cabinet session Oct. 7. His weblog, on which the Lower House member harshly criticized Abe's push to restart idled reactors, suddenly became inaccessible on that day due to "maintenance."

After the government gave the green light to restart reactors at Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture in August, Kono wrote on the weblog that it is "utterly irresponsible to recklessly push for the reactor restarts without solving problems concerning the disposal of nuclear waste."

Asked if he would comply with the government's nuclear policies at the Oct. 7 news conference, Kono said he believes that he and Abe are going "in the same direction" on nuclear policy.

"During the race for the 2012 LDP presidential election, Abe clearly pledged that he will work to reduce the country's reliance on nuclear power in the long term," Kono said. "We are heading in the same direction on this issue."

With regard to the closure of his weblog, Kono said he will instead speak out on his policy principles behind closed doors.

"Until now, I have only spoken out on my policies as an outsider, but I will unwaveringly say what I have to say during intra-government discussions from now on," Kono said.

Any about-face on his anti-nuclear principles would likely trigger an opposition offensive in the Diet sessions, political insiders said.

New minister Kono now 'going in same direction' as Abe on nuclear policy

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/08/national/politics-diplomacy/abe-nuclear-policy-critic-kono-newly-appointed-minister-now-going-direction-boss/#.VhZQKivwmos>

Kyodo, Staff Report

One of the newly appointed ministers in Wednesday's Cabinet reshuffle has apparently holstered his criticism of the government's nuclear policy, potentially exposing him to the charge that he traded his belief in exchange for a prestigious post.

Taro Kono, a Liberal Democratic Party lawmaker who was named chairman of the National Public Safety Commission and minister in charge of administrative reform and disaster management, has been a vocal critic of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's nuclear policy.

More than four years into the Fukushima nuclear crisis, the Abe government is pursuing the restart of idled reactors to sustain the economy. Kono has specifically opposed the government's attempt to promote the recycling of spent nuclear fuel, while calling for a staged reduction in the country's reliance on nuclear power.

Asked at his inaugural news conference Wednesday night whether he will retain his criticism of Abe's nuclear policy, Kono said he was "going in the same direction" as his boss.

Kono, a seventh-term Lower House member from Kanagawa Prefecture, also said he would sincerely work to fulfill his duties within the government.

"But I will say what I have to say," Kono added.

Kono, who is generally viewed as a liberal within the LDP, was apparently trying to deny policy inconsistencies within the new Cabinet, but his comment Wednesday may draw fire from the opposition camp that he traded his soul in exchange for a Cabinet post, political observers said.

As of Thursday morning, Kono's blog site was inaccessible due to "maintenance."

Kono hails from a political family. His father, Yohei, is known as a political dove who was a former Lower House speaker. In 1993 as chief Cabinet secretary he issued a landmark apology statement over the "comfort women" issue affecting women and girls forced to provide sex for the wartime Japanese military.

Nobel winner Alexievich & nuclear power

October 9, 2015

Nobel winning writer warned of dangers of nuclear power during Japan visit

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201510090039

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The new Nobel laureate in literature warned that even a minor natural disaster could lead to a nuclear catastrophe during her visit to Japan in 2003, according to a doctor who met the writer.

Svetlana Alexievich, a journalist born in Ukraine and raised in Belarus, the nations affected by the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, published "**Voices from Chernobyl--Chronicle of the Future**" in 1997 about the consequences of the calamity.

"I vividly remember that she said **peaceful use of nuclear power and nuclear weapons are two sides of a coin**, completely identical," said Minoru Kamata, a medical doctor and chairman of the Japan Chernobyl Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides medical assistance to those affected by the disaster.

"She continued to say that in Japan (the danger of) nuclear power generation is covered up in the name of peaceful use, but even a minor natural disaster could lead to a serious accident," he added.

Alexievich, 67, was named the recipient of this year's Nobel Prize in Literature on Oct. 8 "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time."

Kamata said the award of a Nobel Prize to a critic of nuclear power should strike a chord with people in Japan who experienced the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011 and are now watching as the government begins to reactivate nuclear reactors.

During her visit to Japan, Alexievich also met traditional Japanese storyteller Kaori Kanda twice--in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture, and in Nagoya.

One of Kanda's noted tales is a story about Chernobyl based on Alexievich's book.

Kanda, who is from Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture, had long harbored doubts about the safety of nuclear power stations even before the Fukushima triple meltdown.

When Kanda performed her Chernobyl tale during Alexievich's visit, the journalist commended it, saying, "You told a tale that exemplified exactly what I wanted to convey through my book."

Kyushu protestors against 2nd reactor restart

October 13, 2015

Nearly 2,000 protest restart of 2nd nuclear reactor in Kyushu

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201510130025

By TAKESHI NAKASHIMA/ Staff Writer

KAGOSHIMA--About 1,800 people from around Kyushu converged here on Oct. 12 to protest the planned restart of another reactor at the Sendai nuclear plant, saying the operator has made a decision that is "suicidal."

Waving placards stating, "Nuclear plant, no more," and shouting slogans in unison, the protesters, who are members of anti-nuclear groups and other citizens in the Kyushu region, started the rally in front of JR Kagoshima-chuo Station.

Kyushu Electric Power Co. is pushing to bring online the No. 2 reactor at the plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, as early as Oct. 15. In August, the No. 1 reactor at the plant resumed operations, the first in Japan under stricter safety standards implemented after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The protesters were particularly critical of what they described as Kyushu Electric's "suicidal" decision to restart the No. 2 reactor without replacing a steam generator in the reactor building with more durable one. The utility had planned to replace the generator in 2009.

The rally kicked off with a special concert by the Seifuku Kojo linkai (Uniform improvement committee) idol group, known for its original songs containing progressive political messages.

In her address at the rally, Ryoko Torihara, chairwoman of a local residents group in Satsuma-Sendai demanding the nuclear plant's closure, criticized others in the city for **depending economically and psychologically on nuclear power.**

"Three decades have passed since the plant started operations, and residents no longer seem to have creative minds to come up with alternative methods to sustain the city's economy," Torihara said. "We are still dependent on the nuclear plant through and through, and it has deprived us of incentives to change the status quo."

During his speech, Wataru Ogawa, a member of an anti-nuclear citizens group in neighboring Miyazaki Prefecture, called for residents in Kyushu to stop buying electricity from Kyushu Electric to press the regional utility to abandon nuclear energy.

“To change Kyushu Electric’s attitude toward nuclear energy, we must purposefully refuse to buy electricity from the company once the electricity distribution becomes deregulated,” Ogawa said. After the rally, the protesters marched through the center of the city.

Still voicing his opposition to Kaminoseki plant

October 14, 2015

Former nuclear power worker, 92, keeps up fight against planned Yamaguchi plant

by Satoshi Fujiwara
Kyodo



Female residents on Iwai Island, Yamaguchi Prefecture, participate in a protest over the construction of a nuclear power plant, in July 2011. | KYODO

YAMAGUCHI – Based on his own experience working in the nuclear power industry, Ichio Isobe, 92, is gravely concerned by moves to reactivate Japan’s idled reactors.

“Given its small national land, people won’t have a place to live if an accident like the (March 2011) Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant occurs again,” said Isobe, a stern opponent of a proposal to build a nuclear plant on the Inland Sea coast in Yamaguchi Prefecture.

Isobe lives on Iwai Island, a small island off that coast.

In 1982, Chubu Electric Power Co. proposed building a nuclear power plant on the coast in Kaminoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture, 3.5 km from Iwai Island. The sea between the planned construction site and the island is a very fertile fishing ground.

After returning to Japan in December 1945 from World War II, Isobe worked at various times in a coal mine, a thermal power plant and at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, where in 2011 the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl occurred.

From late 1978 to early 1979, Isobe worked for a subcontractor at the Fukushima plant. He remembers how carefully workers needed to dress to avoid exposure to radiation.

“I wore three pairs of gloves — a pair of cloth gloves, then a pair of rubber gloves sealed around the wrists with adhesive tape, and on top of those, an additional pair of rubber gloves,” he recalled.

On his last day of work there, a foreign object was found at the bottom of a pump and Isobe was ordered by the foreman to wipe it off with a rag.

Isobe hesitated because the pump contained highly radioactive material. And when Isobe, prompted by the foreman, cleaned the bottom of the pump, a radiation alarm sounded.

He would later learn about the danger of nuclear power generation from the likes of Jinzaburo Takagi, an author who wrote about the threat of nuclear waste, and well-known anti-nuclear activist Yuko Fujita, an assistant professor at Keio University, who were among experts who visited Iwai.

While most members of the Kaminoseki town assembly were in favor of the construction plan, opposition began to grow among island residents.

Isobe and others who had worked at nuclear plants mounted a campaign to oppose the plan, visiting local households to warn that the atomic plant could destroy life on the island.

Iwai is home to many people who have worked at atomic power plants, because the scarcity of arable land forced many residents to seek work elsewhere.

Groups of local women also walked around the island to voice their opposition, while fishermen staged sit-ins and seaborne protests.

Preparatory construction work for the Kaminoseki plant began in 2009, but due to the strong local opposition was stopped. Since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, construction has remained stalled.

Isobe said seven people he knew who had worked at nuclear plants had died of cancer, and Isobe himself has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. “But I feel I’m lucky as I have lived this long,” he said.

What about safety?

October 15, 2015

EDITORIAL: Safety put on the back burner as another nuclear reactor is restarted

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201510150040>



People rally in front of the Sendai nuclear power plant to protest the restart of its No. 2 reactor in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, on Oct. 15. (Jun Kaneko)

Kyushu Electric Power Co. is set to restart the No. 2 reactor at its Sendai nuclear power plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, on Oct. 15. In August, the plant's No. 1 reactor became the first to resume operations under new safety regulations that went into force in July 2013.

Some areas near the plant may not even have a dependable evacuation route in the event of a disaster. Furthermore, no evacuation drills for residents have been undertaken.

The electric utility's plan to restart the idled reactor was given the green light by the Nuclear Regulation Authority. The nuclear watchdog body has no authority, however, to examine evacuation plans.

A reactor should not be restarted under such circumstances.

Four hundred or so people live in the Soro district near the mouth of the Sendaigawa river, the community located closest to the Sendai nuclear plant.

Experts have warned that all possible evacuation routes for the residents would become unusable in case of multiple disasters stemming from an accident at the plant, leaving the community totally isolated.

The municipal government has designated a bridge over the mouth of the river and a prefectural road along the river as the emergency evacuation route for the residents of the Soro district. But the bridge could collapse in a powerful quake, while the prefectural road would likely become impassable due to tsunami or high waves.

The only other road that vehicles could use is a forest path that would become impassable if the slope alongside it collapsed.

Despite repeated requests from the district, no steps to ensure the safety of the residents were taken before the No. 1 reactor resumed operations in August.

The myth that a serious nuclear accident is unlikely to occur because of a natural disaster was utterly destroyed by the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in March 2011.

In order to ensure the safety of local residents, evacuation plans that include designated evacuation routes should also be part of the procedure for approving a reactor restart.

A system to assess the effectiveness of evacuation plans through drills involving residents, with a way of making revisions to the plans if necessary, should be established from the viewpoint of residents. Such functions could be placed under the NRA or another organization.

Also causing safety concerns among residents is the decision to bring the No. 2 reactor back online without replacing its aged steam generators.

At the Sendai plant, small pipes in the No. 1 reactor's steam generators were found to be corroded one after another around 2000, forcing the utility to replace the generators in 2008.

In 2009, Kyushu Electric Power announced plans to replace all three steam generators at the No. 2 reactor as part of moves to "further enhance the reliability" of the reactor. The utility received permission to do this from the industry minister.

After the Fukushima nuclear disaster, however, the company decided to postpone the replacement as it became preoccupied with making preparations for the NRA's inspections based on post-Fukushima safety requirements.

In May this year, the company's plan to restart the reactor with the old steam generators was approved by the NRA. The replacement has still not been done.

Kyushu Electric Power says it only considered replacing the generators as a highly precautionary measure and stresses that its plan to restart the reactor with the current generators has cleared the NRA's safety checks.

But failing to take the step that was necessary for enhancing reliability inevitably undermines reliability. Not surprisingly, local residents have voiced concerns about the safety of the reactor, questioning its ability to withstand a major earthquake.

Last year, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he would not allow a reactor startup unless its safety is completely confirmed.

But the process of approving reactor restarts at the Sendai nuclear power plant has not been in line with his pledge at all.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Oct. 15

Protestors gather around Sendai plant

October 15, 2015

Citizens protest restart of Sendai reactor

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20151015_18.html

Oct. 15, 2015 - Updated 05:06 UTC+2

About 70 citizens rallied on Thursday in protest of the restart of a reactor at the Sendai nuclear plant in southwestern Japan.

The protesters gathered outside the plant early in the morning.

They took turns at a microphone to speak out against the restart.

One protester urged the crowd to remember the nuclear accident in Fukushima. Another said there should be no restart without a sufficient evacuation plan.

The head of a group opposing the construction of the Sendai plant, Ryoko Torihara, said many citizens are still anxious about reactors being restarted.

She said **there should be no restarts as long as there are challenges to the evacuation plans.**

Let hibakusha become a household word

October 21, 2015

In anti-nuke push, Japan wants world to know the word 'hibakusha'

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201510210053

By HAJIMU TAKEDA/ Staff Writer

Japan hopes “hibakusha” will become a household term with resonance on a world-wide level.

The word is packed with powerful energy and tragic imagery as it is the Japanese noun meaning “a survivor of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima or Nagasaki.”

But hibakusha is little known outside of Japan.

In submitting a resolution on the abolition of nuclear weapons to the U.N. General Assembly on Oct. 20, the Japanese government used “Hibakushas” for the first time to mark the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of the two cities in the closing days of World War II.

While similar resolutions have been jointly submitted by Japan and other nations since 1994, this year’s resolution particularly calls for political leaders and young people from around the world to listen to the accounts of the terror of nuclear bombings from hibakusha themselves.

Several dozen countries, including the United States, plan to sign the resolution, which was submitted to the U.N. General Assembly’s First Committee that deals with disarmament and security issues.

The Japanese government hopes to collect support from as many countries as possible to make the resolution a vital guideline for the United Nations’ efforts on nuclear disarmament.

During a meeting of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons in April, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida called for world leaders to visit his hometown of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

His message was intended to encourage leaders to face up to the heinous consequences of nuclear warfare, but the proposal was not included in the conference’s Final Document because China opposed it, claiming it only emphasized damages incurred on Japan during the war.

To avoid a similar block, Japan's resolution did not call for the world leaders to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki and instead said their "visits to the cities devastated by the use of nuclear weapons" should be encouraged.

Protestors in Ehime

October 26, 2015

Anti-restart protestors rally in Ehime

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20151026_23.html

Oct. 26, 2015 - Updated 03:52 UTC+1

About 30 people have gathered in front of the Ehime prefectural office in Matsuyama City to protest a decision by the governor to approve the restart of the Ikata No.3 nuclear reactor.

The participants called on the governor to withdraw the decision.

Tsukasa Wada, a senior member of the protest group, says Governor Tokihiro Nakamura has said in the past that he would think about the matter comprehensively, but that the remark is questionable.

He says he doubts if the governor has listened to the people opposing the restart.

Koizumi and Hosokawa in Hakodate

October 29, 2015

Koizumi, Hosokawa head to Hakodate to help city fight MOX nuke plant across strait

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/10/29/national/koizumi-hosokawa-head-hakodate-help-city-fight-mox-uke-plant-across-strait/#.VjHVyt1Cot>

Kyodo

HAKODATE – Former Prime Ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Morihiro Hosokawa, who are now known as leading opponents of nuclear energy, will visit Hakodate in Hokkaido Thursday **to lend a hand to its mayor's campaign against the construction of a nearby atomic plant slated to use mixed oxide (MOX) fuel. In April 2014, the Hakodate Municipal Government sued the central government as well as plant operator Electric Power Development Co. (J-Power), demanding construction be halted on the Oma nuclear plant, located in Aomori Prefecture across the Tsugaru Strait just 23 km away.**

Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo and many residents of the city believe a nuclear accident at the MOX plant could endanger their lives.

The lawsuit filed with the Tokyo District Court is a sign that municipalities at risk of being seriously affected by a nuclear crisis want a greater say in safety matters.

After holding talks with the mayor, **Koizumi, who is still popular with the public**, will give a lecture on Japan's energy policy in Hakodate.

A-bomb survivors demand extension of black rain area

November 5, 2015

Hiroshima A-bomb survivors demand recognition as 'black rain' victims

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201511050052

By GEN OKAMOTO/ Staff Writer

HIROSHIMA--A group of atomic bomb survivors here has filed a lawsuit against local governments demanding recognition as victims of radioactive "black rain" and access to free medical checkups.

In the suit filed at the Hiroshima District Court on Nov. 4, the 64 plaintiffs said the Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments should retract their earlier rejections and certify the victims as hibakusha atomic bomb survivors.

The plaintiffs argue it is unacceptable that they have not received the hibakusha certificates despite their exposure to black rain.

The plaintiffs said they believe this is the first group lawsuit demanding recognition as victims of the radioactive black rain that fell shortly after the atomic bombing of the city on Aug. 6, 1945.

The central government in 1976 officially recognized atomic bomb survivors who were exposed to black rain in an area near ground zero. The decision was based on 1953 findings by the Hiroshima local observatory, which concluded that there was "heavy" precipitation of radioactive black rain in that area. Survivors in this area have been given free health checkups. If they develop cancer or cirrhosis, they can receive financial assistance for treatment as certified hibakusha.

But those exposed to black rain in other areas are not eligible for the relief measures. The Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments have not issued certificates to these people in line with the central government's designation.

The plaintiffs said the central government's judgment was "extremely unfair."

"Some of us have suffered cancer and other illnesses and have been worried about our health over the years due to our exposure to black rain," one of the plaintiffs said.

After the suit was filed, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui and Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki released statements that said they were taking seriously the fact that victims have resorted to legal action to seek relief measures.

The municipal and prefectural governments, they said, had no choice but to reject the plaintiffs' requests because the central government has not expanded the recognized area of heavy black rain.

The local governments have asked the central government to widen the recognized area for relief sixfold based on their study conducted in fiscal 2008.

But the central government declined that request in 2012, citing a health ministry panel report that concluded the proposed expansion lacked scientific grounds.

A-bomb survivors file suit demanding 'black rain' area be expanded

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20151104p2a00m0na020000c.html>

HIROSHIMA -- A group of 64 Hiroshima atomic bombing survivors have filed a suit demanding local governments expand areas covered by free checkups for people exposed to radioactive "black rain" after the bombing.

The plaintiffs -- all residents of Hiroshima Prefecture -- are currently not receiving assistance under the Atomic Bomb Survivors' Assistance Law as they were outside the black rain area recognized by the government. They had earlier applied to the Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments for A-bomb survivors' certificates, but their requests were rejected.

The group filed the suit with the Hiroshima District Court on Nov. 4, demanding the Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments issue A-bomb survivors' certificates to them. While the Hiroshima Municipal Government is demanding the black rain area recognized under the assistance law be expanded, the national government has been lukewarm to the idea. Through the lawsuit, the plaintiffs are seeking to have the government review the system for recognizing A-bomb survivors and expand the designated black rain area.

According to the complaint, the plaintiffs -- who were 5 months to 20 years old at the time of the Aug. 6, 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima by U.S. forces -- currently suffer from cancer, anemia, hypothyroidism and other symptoms due to their exposure to the radioactive black rain, which hit the city shortly after the bombing.

In March this year, the plaintiffs started applying for A-bomb survivors' certificates and another type of certificate that could be converted into the first type once they develop certain diseases with the Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments, claiming that they were "under circumstances susceptible to radiation from the atomic bombing" and were therefore eligible for the certificates. Their requests, however, were turned down.

In the suit filed with the Hiroshima District Court, the plaintiffs are demanding the Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments nullify their decisions to turn down their applications for those certificates. However, because the local governments' decisions were based on current laws and ordinances, the plaintiffs are also contesting the relevance of the national government's relief measures for A-bomb survivors.

In 2010, the Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments asked the national government to expand the recognized black rain area by six times the current size after conducting an independent survey on A-bomb survivors. However, the national government concluded in 2012 that it would not expand the recognized area on the grounds that an expert panel to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare decided that there were "no scientific grounds" in the survey results.

Masaaki Takano, 77, head of the plaintiffs' group and chairman of an association of Hiroshima Prefecture black rain victims' groups, said, "The national government failed to recognize our longtime pleas and the prefectural and municipal governments' requests to expand the recognized area. We have no choice but to bring the case to court."

In comments released after the filing of the suit, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui and Hiroshima Gov. Hidehiko Yuzaki said they understood that people who were not recognized by the law as A-bomb survivors felt compelled to opt for seeking legal judgment. In the meantime, they also said that they had no choice but to reject survivors' applications based on the current laws and government decrees, adding that they would respond to the matter properly after consulting with the national government.

Hisa Iwami

November 7, 2015

INSIGHT: Fukushima disaster keeps 100,000 from descending on 'sweet home'

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/column/AJ201511070008>



A monument inscribed with a poem written by Hisa Iwami, under her pen name, Hisako, stands by the side of a folk heritage museum in Tanohata, Iwate Prefecture. (Toshihide Ueda)

By TOSHIHIDE UEDA/ Senior Staff Writer

TANOHATA, Iwate Prefecture--Anti-nuclear campaigner Hisa Iwami, who worked as a public health nurse in this northeastern village, died on Sept. 19. She was 97.

I returned to the village recently to mourn for her.

As I wrote in an earlier column about Iwami, a proposal came out of the blue more than 30 years ago to build a nuclear power plant in this village. Women in Tanohata became united under Iwami to fight the project. No nuclear plant was built there.

Iwami was lying in bed when I last met her in July. She was no longer able to move her body at will, but she spoke in a firm tone when she said, "Perhaps I didn't come to Tanohata in vain because I blocked the plan to build a nuclear plant."

A folk heritage museum of the village government stands near Hofukuji temple, where Iwami spent more than half a century of her life. The museum shows the history of Sanhei Ikki, a peasant uprising that originated twice from here during the late Edo Period (1603-1867). By the side of the museum stand statues of two villagers who led the uprising, along with a monument inscribed with a poem written by Iwami.

"There is no sweet home for me but here/ I say to myself/ The air is clear/ With no trace of dust"

She wrote the poem when she first visited Tanohata in the early postwar period. A nuclear plant was probably something that would have soiled her "sweet home." By the side of the statues of the two leaders of Sanhei Ikki, the monument to the poem preserves the memory of the "third uprising" that took place here again.

Looking up, I found the sky perfectly clear and blue. That was the "authentic sky," the beauty of which Iwami said held her spellbound.

'SHIELD' FOR PRESERVING LIVES

Iwami's actions must have been driven by a desire to preserve all lives that have been born into this world.

She showered her only son with all her love after her first husband died of an illness. The mere sight of a pointed bamboo stump cut slantwise led her to fear that her son could get hurt on it if he took a tumble. But a disease took his life at a young age. Iwami was startled to discover that the sight of a bamboo stump no longer induced any fear in her.

"I used to concentrate my attention so much on my own child alone that I didn't care about a child next door," Iwami said. "I felt ashamed about that."

Her autobiography also mentions that moment in her life.

"I learned that many things were still left in this world for me to do," she wrote in the book. "That was the starting point for my own rebirth."

Iwami remarried the head priest of Hofukuji temple and began making the rounds of new settlements as a "development public health nurse." She put her heart and soul into improving the health of villagers, children in particular. Nowhere else than in the natural environment of her newfound "sweet home" did she see a shield for preserving lives.

"What's the situation in Fukushima like?" Iwami would ask me every time I met her.

She would listen to me with a serious look when I told her about the harsh conditions of areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster of 2011 and about the plight of evacuees. Perhaps her mind's eye at the time was seeing the terrain in Fukushima covered with bamboo stumps.

'AUTHENTIC SKY' OVER FUKUSHIMA

The Fukushima Renewable Energy Institute, part of the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), was opened in spring last year in the city of Koriyama to serve as a center for the rebuilding of Fukushima Prefecture.

Three pieces of Japanese-style paintings are hanging in its main building. They were painted by Kaneko Takahashi, a resident of Maebashi, the capital of Gunma Prefecture, on the southern side of Mount Akagiyama, who died at 80 late last year. The works were donated in March by the painter's oldest son, Masaki, 52, a research manager at the AIST's Research Institute of Geology and Geoinformation.

"My mother insisted on living with Mount Akagiyama standing in the background," the painter's son said. "She continued to believe she was the happiest that way."

Takahashi took motifs from Fukushima after the 2011 disasters.

"So: Fukushima no Umi" (In thought: seas of Fukushima), her 2012 work, and "Seiso no Umi (Fukushima)" (Ocean blue (Fukushima)), her 2013 piece, each show a woman, painted as large as the canvas, casting her eyes downward against the backdrop of a dark ocean. But "Adatara no Sora" (Skies over Adatara), her 2014 work, depicts a female figure sitting on folded legs on a green patch of earth and staring in the distance, with a bright-colored sky and mountains in the background.

Adatara is the name of a mountain in Fukushima Prefecture. In "Chieko-sho" (The Chieko Poems), a well-known collection of poems by Kotaro Takamura (1883-1956), the poet quoted his wife, Chieko, who grew up with a view of Mount Adatara, as telling him that there was no sky over Tokyo and she wished to see an "authentic sky."

The sky on the canvas probably shows the "authentic sky" in that poetic work. The female figure in the painting is probably looking toward hopes for the future.

"The woman appears to be floating," painter Shigeyoshi Sakai said he told Takahashi when he saw the painting. Sakai, 67, who also lives in Maebashi, is the deputy director of Nihonga-In, an association of painters to which Takahashi belonged.

"I don't mind if she looks that way," he quoted Takahashi as telling him.

If that is the case, the female figure probably embodies the souls of Fukushima residents who descend on their "sweet home."

In reality, four years after the nuclear disaster, more than 100,000 residents of Fukushima remain evacuated and have yet to have an opportunity to descend on their "sweet home," which serves as a shield for preserving lives.

"Let's continue our opposition"



Koichi Kawano takes part in a sit-in in Nagasaki on Nov. 9, 2015. The sit-ins are

Koichi Kawano takes part in a sit-in in Nagasaki on Nov. 9, 2015. The sit-ins are held monthly in memory of the Aug. 9, 1945 atomic bombing of the city. (Mainichi)

November 12, 2015

Hibakusha: Continuing calls for abolition of Japan's new security laws

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/features/news/20151112p2a00m0na014000c.html>

NAGASAKI -- On the late autumn day of Nov. 9, residents gathered in front of the Peace Statue at Nagasaki Peace Park. The residents stage sit-ins on the ninth of every month in memory of the devastating atomic

bombing of Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945. Within the ring of residents sat 75-year-old Koichi Kawano, chairman of the Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs.

With a stern expression, Kawano spoke out against security-related legislation that was recently railroaded into law.

"Let's continue our opposition," Kawano said, clutching a microphone. "We have to raise our voices more."

Less than two months after the legislation was passed, topics of conversation and interest in society are turning toward economic policies and other issues. Kawano seemed almost desperate.

Kawano was hit by the atomic bombing of Nagasaki when he was 5 years old. At the time he was on a street near his home 3.1 kilometers from the hypocenter. He spotted a U.S. B-29 bomber flying overhead and right afterwards, when the blast of the bomb hit, it hurled him 10 meters.

Fortunately he was not injured, and the other members of his family were safe. In the bomb shelter, Kawano's grandparents forbade the children from going outside, telling them that there were many people burned so badly one couldn't tell if they were men or women. On a mountainside that evening, as the family headed to a bigger bomb shelter, Kawano saw the city burning red.

Later, when Kawano was in his second year of elementary school, his teacher entered the classroom one day with a happy expression on her face.

"Listen, everybody, Japan has become a country that doesn't wage war," she said. The teacher earnestly taught the students the significance of Japan's new Constitution, which came into effect in May 1947. She focused especially on war-renouncing Article 9.

At the time there wasn't enough food, and there were many war orphans. But when he thought, "So we're going to have peace from now on," Kawano was filled with hope. This marked his encounter with Japan's pacifist Constitution.

After graduating from high school, Kawano began working for the Nagasaki Prefectural Government, and devoted himself to labor union activities. Both as an atomic bomb survivor, or hibakusha, and as chairman of the Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs, Kawano spoke out against war and nuclear weapons. The day after Japan's security-related legislation was rammed through a special committee of the House of Councillors on Sept. 17, Kawano held a news conference in Nagasaki.

"Do politicians know just how many people suffered in the atomic bombings? This is the worst stain in the history of Constitutional politics," he said.

Being one of the younger hibakusha, Kawano plans to take part in demonstrations and gatherings to call for abolishment of the security legislation. In Nagasaki, young people launched a group opposing the security legislation, and they continue to hold regular demonstrations.

Seeing demonstrators calling out "No more Hiroshimas, no more Nakasakis," Kawano feels he can depend on them.

"Fortunately, the Constitution has not been changed. We must not give up," he said. He repeated his words a second time, and then a third, as if he were speaking to himself. (By Asuka Ohira, Nagasaki Bureau; photo by Toyokazu Tsumura)

(This is the second part of a six-part series.)

Piano of peace & Himawari choir

November 12, 2015

Atomic bomb survivor plays 'piano of peace' that also survived blast

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201511120035

By TAKAKO ISHIDA/ Staff Writer

Toshihiko Yoshii performs across Japan with his "hibaku piano," an instrument that survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, just like he did--although he was in his mother's womb when the bomb exploded. On Aug. 6, 70 years to the day after the bomb was dropped, Yoshii was the final performer at a concert at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

"Whether it's 70 years or 71 years after the bombing, that changes nothing," said Yoshii, 69. "I want to tell people who don't know about it. Playing the piano is my peace movement."

Hibakusha is the term used to describe survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while "hibaku" alone means to have been "atomic bombed."

Yoshii's mother was 2.4 kilometers from ground zero when the atomic bomb detonated over the city. Futon mattresses hanging out to dry shielded the four-month pregnant woman from the blast.

When Yoshii was a child, he was examined annually by the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission--established by the United States--to gauge the effects of the atomic bomb on fetuses in the womb.

At Hiroshima University, Yoshii belonged to a music club, and he secured a part-time job playing the piano. After graduation he worked as a jazz pianist in Tokyo, but never spoke about his circumstances regarding the atomic bombing because he feared discrimination. Before turning 50 he moved to Sakaide, Kagawa Prefecture, his parents' hometown.

He first played the hibaku piano when he was 62, at a gathering of hibakusha in Kagawa. The instrument is a Yamaha, built in 1932. It was damaged in the blast, sitting in a private home 1.8 kilometers from the epicenter. Flying glass shards left gashes in the piano.

"I was moved, because like me, it survived the atomic bombing," said Yoshii.

He thought he had found his calling, both as a pianist and as someone who went through the bombing while in the womb. Yoshii describes his playing of the piano at that time as "a cicada coming out of the ground in its 62nd year." Since then he has given more than 100 performances throughout the country.

Last year, Yoshii and former classmates founded the Genbaku Tainai Hibakusha Zenkoku Renrakukai (National liaison conference for hibakusha in the womb when the atomic bomb exploded). Yoshii sees its role as connecting aging atomic bomb survivors with the next generation.

November 11, 2015

Hibakusha' choir uses power of song to promote nuclear-free world

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/people/AJ201511110048

By SHOHEI OKADA/ Staff Writer

NAGASAKI--When Yoshiko Hirahara joined a choir comprising fellow “hibakusha” (atomic-bomb survivors), she doubted songs could convey the horrors of nuclear warfare.

But cheers and a student’s note in the country that dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in 1945 have cemented her belief that her activities could someday lead to a nuclear-free world.

On Aug. 9, six years after joining the “Himawari” (sunflower) choir, Hirahara, 86, led a performance by the 50-strong group at this year’s Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony to pay tribute to victims of the atomic bombing of the city 70 years ago. The song called for humanity not to repeat the tragedy of nuclear weapons.

During World War II, Hirahara worked as a teacher at an elementary school on an island off the coast of Nagasaki.

Hirahara and a co-worker were in Nagasaki early in the morning of Aug. 9, 1945. The pair split up, promising to meet later that evening to take the ferry back to their island. Her friend headed toward what would be ground zero of the nuclear blast from the weapon dropped by a U.S. B-29 bomber around 11 a.m.

Hirahara never saw her friend again.

Now, she sings to remember her friend and honor the thousands who were killed or injured by the bomb. In spring this year, Himawari held a concert in New York, the group’s first overseas performance. After hearing the extended applause from the concertgoers, Hirahara realized that a growing number of Americans feel sympathy for the hibakusha and their experiences.

After the concert, an American high school student wrote in a questionnaire that it was doubtful the entire world would ever become peaceful but vowed to continue efforts toward the impossible “dream.”

Hirahara said she was moved and encouraged by the message.

“I will continue singing as long as I am physically able to do so,” she says.

Koji Ueda: Collecting stories of A-bomb victims

November 15, 2015

A-bomb survivor works to get anti-nuke message to nuclear powers

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20151115p2a00m0na004000c.html>

A survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bombing is trying to get the anti-nuclear message to nuclear-armed countries through translating and publishing the stories of those who lived through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Koji Ueda, 73, was formerly the vice-head of the secretariat of Toyukai, a Tokyo organization of A-bomb survivors. He is collecting stories from a variety of sources, including Shuntaro Hida, 98, a doctor who treated A-bomb victims.

Ueda himself was exposed to the radiation of the Hiroshima bomb when he returned with his mother to check on their house near the blast hypocenter. Though he doesn't have memories from that time, **he has spread the stories of the A-bomb survivors both within and outside of Japan.** Last year, with the help from

a Bangladeshi friend, Ueda self-published stories in Bengali, a language that is also spoken in India -- one of the nuclear powers.

At the Review Conference for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in May this year, a call for leaders around the world to visit the bombing sites in Japan was removed from an agreement document due to opposition from China. This led Ueda to believe that nuclear-armed countries need to hear the voices of A-bomb survivors.

Ueda now seeks to publish these stories in Chinese, and is raising funds through the website : <https://www.makuake.com/project/hiroshima-nagasaki-peace/> (in Japanese).

Waste site surveys delayed

November 19, 2015

Govt. to postpone nuclear waste site survey

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Nov. 19, 2015 - Updated 13:14 UTC+1

Japan's Environment Ministry has informed Miyagi Prefecture that it will postpone a plan to start onsite surveys by the end of the year of 3 possible sites for a radioactive waste disposal facility.

State Minister of Environment Shinji Inoue met Miyagi Governor Yoshihiro Murai at the prefectural government office on Thursday.

Inoue said ministry officials had paid daily visits to the candidate sites since last month. He added that **local opposition prevented them from starting the surveys before snow accumulates on the ground.**

He added that the ministry plans to hold a meeting of municipal mayors in the prefecture by the end of the year to continue seeking local understanding for the plan.

Murai said 2 years have passed since the government proposed building a disposal site for radioactive waste, but said it has done nothing. He said this is due to **a lack of political leadership.**

Murai said he's disappointed at the ministry's handling of the plan.

The ministry has put off the survey in Miyagi for 2 straight years.

Radioactive waste site surveys to be postponed

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Nov. 19, 2015 - Updated 02:55 UTC+1

Japan's Environment Ministry is likely to postpone a plan to start onsite surveys by the year-end of 3 candidate sites for a radioactive waste disposal facility in Miyagi Prefecture. The postponement was due to local opposition to the plan, among other problems.

State Minister of the Environment Shinji Inoue is expected to convey the decision to Miyagi Governor Yoshihiro Murai at the prefectural government office on Thursday.

The ministry plans to conduct field surveys at the sites, including one in the town of Kami, to dispose of contaminated waste from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in the neighboring prefecture.

Ministry officials have paid daily visits to Kami since last month to try to conduct the survey, but local opposition prevented them from starting the examination.

Ministry officials wanted to start the surveys by the year-end before snow piles up on the ground. But Kami authorities plan to block roads leading to the candidate site starting on Friday.

Municipalities of other candidate sites -- Kurihara City and Taiwa Town, have indicated that they may give up the offer to host the sites if the surveys were not conducted by the end of this year.

Everyone has "the right to avoid nuclear damage"

November 23, 2015

Intl. forum calls for nuclear damage prevention

Nov. 23, 2015 - Updated 18:27 UTC+1

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20151123_22.html

Nuclear victims attending an international forum in Hiroshima have called for the prevention of damage caused by nuclear substances.

The World Nuclear Victims Forum opened on Saturday, marking the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It has brought together people who have been exposed to radiation from 9 countries, including the United States and Australia.

They include those who were exposed to radiation due to nuclear bombs tests and uranium mining.

The participants wrapped up their 3-day meeting on Monday by unanimously adopting the Hiroshima Declaration.

The declaration says everyone has "the right to avoid nuclear damage" as well as the right to be free of pressure to engage in work that can lead to radiation exposure.

The declaration notes people must not use nuclear energy because contamination will last for a long period of time should a nuclear disaster occur. It says there is no clear vision to secure the disposal of

nuclear waste.

The declaration also says state governments promoting nuclear energy policies, as well as companies that cause contamination and their shareholders, should be held responsible in the event of a nuclear disaster.

The secretary general of the forum, Haruko Moritaki, said the participants were able to discuss what should be done in the future.

She added that she wants to create an international network with this week's meeting serving as a beginning.

13 prefectures against hosting nuclear waste site

November 29, 2015

Thirteen prefectures say no to hosting nuclear waste depository

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/11/29/national/thirteen-prefectures-say-no-hosting-nuclear-waste-depository/#.VlqnLL8R-ov>

Kyodo

A total of 13 out of the nation's 47 prefectures say they would refuse to host a final disposal site for highly radioactive nuclear waste, a Kyodo News survey showed Saturday.

In the survey conducted between late October and early November, 13 local governments said they would "never accept" such a facility, eight sounded negative, while 24 declined to clarify their position and two said they will "carefully consider the possibility." None showed a positive stance toward hosting the site. In May, the government introduced a plan in which it will choose candidate sites for burying high-level radioactive waste based on scientific analysis, rather than waiting for municipalities to express a willingness to host a final depository.

The change of policy reflects the lack of progress made in the process of soliciting candidate sites that began in 2002 due to safety concerns.

For permanent disposal, high-level nuclear waste needs to be stored in a final depository more than 300 meters underground for up to 100,000 years until radiation levels fall and it no longer poses a threat to humans and the environment.

Among the 13 prefectures opposed to accommodating a disposal site, four host nuclear power plants.

Fukui Prefecture, where the largest number of nuclear plants are located, said, "We have accepted (nuclear) power generation, but do not have a duty to take nuclear waste." Ishikawa Prefecture said municipalities that consume large amounts of electricity should be given a priority as candidate sites.

Kochi Prefecture, whose municipality applied in 2007 for research to be conducted into whether it can host a final nuclear waste disposal site in exchange for government subsidies, said it "cannot afford" a depository. The Kochi town of Toyo canceled its application later that year due to protests from local residents.

One of the eight prefectures that expressed a negative stance toward hosting a disposal site, **Aomori Prefecture, which currently hosts a spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, said the central government has promised that the facility will not be transformed into a final depository.**

In a multiple-choice question on current concerns, 10 prefectures expressed worry that the state could “force municipalities into accepting” a final disposal site, while 20 were alarmed about the safety of the facility and potential reputational damage, and 17 cited the risk of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that could affect the operation of a depository.

Earlier this month, Finland became the world’s first country to give a green light to construction of a final nuclear waste disposal site, with the aim of having it begin operations in the 2020s.

See also :

13 prefectures refuse to host nuclear waste depository

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20151129p2g00m0dm002000c.html>

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- A total of 13 out of Japan's 47 prefectures have refused to host a final disposal site for highly radioactive nuclear waste, a Kyodo News survey showed Saturday.[...]

"I cannot allow our issue to end up in this manner"

December 5, 2015

Civilians affected by firebombings plan rallies to keep memories alive

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201512050036

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

It could be called their last war cry.

Civilian victims of U.S. air raids in World War II who never received compensation for their suffering will hold a rally in Tokyo on Dec. 8 to remind postwar generations of what they endured.

Military veterans who fought in World War II, civilians who worked for the imperial Japanese military as well as bereaved family members received government compensation after 1945.

Such payments in the form of pensions through 2013 came to at least 54 trillion yen (\$440 billion), according to a study by the Japan Federation of Bar Associations.

In contrast, **between 300,000 and 500,000 ordinary civilians lost loved ones or were themselves injured in firebombings of Japanese cities. However, these individuals were not eligible for pension payments.**

Moreover, every lawsuit seeking compensation ended in defeat, as did all legislation presented to the Diet to pay out monetary benefits.

With this 70th anniversary year of the end of World War II winding down, **many of those individuals felt they had to make one last symbolic act to ensure their experiences remain a part of the public memory.**

"Many of my fellow members have died. And some have left the movement because they were too busy trying to keep up with their own lives," said Teruko Anno, 76, a homemaker from Sakai, Osaka Prefecture, who once served as a co-plaintiff in a lawsuit seeking an apology and compensation from the central government for damages resulting from U.S. air raids in the closing days of World War II. "But, I cannot allow our issue to end in this manner."

As a child, Anno was badly injured in a U.S. firebombing. She was attending kindergarten in Kagoshima Prefecture in July 1945 when shrapnel from an explosion severed her left knee.

She could only attend the entrance ceremony for elementary school because her mother piggybacked her to school. While she eventually was able to walk using a crutch, her disfigurement made her a victim of bullying.

After reaching adulthood, she hid her disability and worked out of her home as a seamstress.

Her life would change dramatically from **1972 with the formation of a national organization of individuals injured due to the war**. That organization was established through the initiative of Chisako Sugiyama, 100, who lost her left eye and part of her face due to the firebombing of Nagoya.

Despite what happened to her, Sugiyama never hid her injuries and spoke out publicly about the need for compensation. Anno was struck by Sugiyama's positive attitude and joined the movement to collect signatures for a petition calling on the central government to provide compensation.

However, **14 attempts to pass legislation failed as did the lawsuits seeking compensation that were filed in courts around the nation**.

Dec. 8 marks the start of the Pacific War as that is when word reached Tokyo of the success of the Imperial Japanese Navy's attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii the day before.

Anno will join others for **a rally near the Diet building seeking government action to help civilians injured during the war**.

When Anno addresses the rally, she plans to say the following: "Were we who have suffered damage wrong? Are you saying we should just bear with what we have gone through?"

(This article was compiled from reports by Senior Staff Writer Tomoaki Ito, Yosuke Watanabe and Jun Sato.)

Kaoru Takamura on restarts

December 5, 2015

INTERVIEW/ Kaoru Takamura: No one willing to take responsibility for restarting nuclear reactors

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/opinion/AJ201512050005>

By SATOSHI DAIGUJI/ Staff Writer

OSAKA--An author who wrote a novel themed on a terrorist attack on a nuclear plant 20 years before the Fukushima disaster unfolded criticized the government for seeking to restart idled reactors as if on cruise control.

"In Japan, there is no stopping something once it has been set in motion," Kaoru Takamura, the 62-year-old author of "Kami no Hi" (Divine fire), told The Asahi Shimbun in a recent interview. "They just go on for no particular reason (continuing policies of the past). This is true not just of nuclear power policy, but of everything.

The Naoki Prize-winning author said only a minimal number of reactors should be allowed to be brought back online to maintain the necessary nuclear technology for decommissioning others and that all other reactors should be scrapped.

Kyushu Electric Power Co. restarted the No. 1 reactor of the Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture in August, the first among the nation's 43 reactors to be brought back online under new safety regulations introduced after the Fukushima disaster.

The reactivation put an end to a period without nuclear power, which lasted for a year and 11 months.

The utility restarted the No. 2 reactor of the Sendai plant in October.

The Abe administration has said the government will seek to restart nuclear reactors once they meet the new safety standards.

Excerpts from the interview follow:

* * *

Question: The No. 3 and No. 4 reactors of the Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture, operated by Kansai Electric Power Co., are being prepared for restarts, whereas the governor of Ehime Prefecture has given his approval to restarting the No. 3 reactor of Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata nuclear power plant. How do you assess the situation?

Takamura: I don't see why the utilities are moving to reactivate their nuclear reactors. Oil prices have fallen, and I don't think thermal power generation is as expensive as it once was. I would say there is no rational reason for rushing to restart reactors, much less at the cost of drawing public criticism.

Q: Kansai Electric and all other regional utilities have returned to the black by the April-September 2015 fiscal period. What is your response to that?

A: That is another reason I don't understand why they are moving to reactivate their reactors. It will be impossible, at any rate, to construct new reactors, and you will have to decide to significantly cut the number of nuclear reactors somewhere along the way at a time when more and more reactors reach a 40-year statutory limit of operations.

After all, nobody in the central government probably wants its pro-nuclear policy to be modified. Japan has relied on the peaceful use of nuclear power as a pillar of its economic policy, and nobody wants to have that course changed.

Q: Japan's nuclear power policy could have been altered, given the 2011 triple meltdown at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. What do you think?

A: In Japan, there is no stopping something once it has been set in motion. I think everything boils down to that. They just go on for no particular reason. This is true not just of nuclear power policy, but of everything. Nobody takes responsibility. Nobody makes a decision. Nobody thinks about the future. The way the Fukushima nuclear disaster was dealt with has left an enormous problem. I think TEPCO should have been made to take the responsibility through and through.

Q: Do you think Japanese society is not able to clearly assign responsibility to a party accountable before going on to the next step?

A: No, it isn't. And that was also the case with the war (World War II). Now, the Fukushima nuclear disaster is being left to fade into oblivion without anyone taking responsibility for the catastrophe. But nothing has ever been settled--such as the issue of radioactive water and the ways to remove debris (melted nuclear fuel).

I visited areas seriously affected by the nuclear disaster on March 11 last year (the third anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which triggered the nuclear accident). I wonder if politicians are seeing what things are like on the ground there. Once you have seen that, I don't believe you will ever want to bring nuclear reactors back online. The areas were deserted and dosimeters kept beeping.

Q: What motivated you to write "Kami no Hi," a work of fiction, in 1991?

A: It's very simple. The Persian Gulf War was going on at the time, and a bunker-busting bomb of the United States was destroying an underground facility built beneath the desert. And the facility had a concrete barrier that was 5 meters thick. I saw that on the news, and I said to myself, "Oh, my God." The concrete barrier that shields a nuclear reactor containment vessel is only about 1 meter thick at its thinnest. That could be penetrated by a single bomb. I thought something terrible could happen if a contingency were to take place on the Korean Peninsula. In addition, no proper security was in place at nuclear power plants in Japan, so terrorists could easily infiltrate them and blow up a control room. That's so scary, I said to myself, though the possibility of an earthquake like the one in 2011 hitting a nuclear plant never crossed my mind at the time.

Q: Do you feel nuclear plants also pose a risk in the Kansai region?

A: All of western Japan would be destroyed if a major disaster were to hit the Ikata nuclear plant. The same can be said of the Takahama nuclear plant. The Kansai region would become uninhabitable if the waters of Lake Biwako were to be contaminated. I suppose management people in Kansai Electric and Shikoku Electric are probably thinking hopefully that no disaster will occur in their own lifetime, or something like that.

The Kansai region has long had nuclear reactors sited nearby, beginning with the Mihama plant's No. 1 reactor (which began operations in 1970). They were already there when you realized it. Like many in the region, I would go, in my childhood, to Fukui Prefecture to swim in the sea, while sighting nuclear reactors. Kansai residents are half-resigned to the prospect that everything would be finished if a nuclear disaster were to hit.

Q: There is a deep-rooted view that Japan, with its scarce natural resources, has to rely on nuclear power. What do you say to that?

A: I am of the generation of people who believed, around the time nuclear fuel was "lit" for the first time in Japan (in 1957) in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, that science and technology will open up the future. So we don't feel put off by the use of nuclear power as one of the leading-edge technologies. But there are other factors--wars, earthquakes and humans. Humans always commit errors. I have concluded that, because of various circumstances outside the scope of science and technology, we should not be using nuclear power in the world today.

Q: So do you believe that no nuclear reactor should be restarted?

A: Well, I wouldn't say we should go nuclear-free no matter what because you cannot just let nuclear technology die out at a time when the decommissioning of reactors will absolutely be unavoidable in the years to come. We need to define a clear-cut policy, whereby we pick out a clutch of nuclear reactors and bring them back online for the specific purpose of decommissioning others, and scrap all the other reactors.

If utilities are to incur any major losses by writing off impairment from the formal decommissioning of their nuclear reactors, we should help redress their account books somehow, such as by ensuring the central government will temporarily cover those losses. I suppose such a measure would prompt utilities to take steps toward scrapping their reactors.

I think the costs for decommissioning the reactors will be much cheaper than the expenses for dealing with the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. I would say that's what rationality is all about. If we were to proceed pointlessly with restarting reactors and if another disaster were to occur elsewhere, we could no longer afford to spend as much money as we did for the Fukushima accident.

* * *

Born in Osaka, Kaoru Takamura, who debuted as a writer with her novel "Ogon wo Daite Tobe" (Fly with the gold) in 1990, won the Naoki Prize, a prestigious literary award, for "Makusu no Yama" (MARKS) in 1993. Her latest work is "Kukai," which partly touches on areas of Fukushima Prefecture that were affected by the nuclear disaster.

Scrap Monju

December 8, 2015

Residents to file suit to scrap Monju

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Dec. 8, 2015 - Updated 12:32 UTC+1

A group of residents in Fukui Prefecture, central Japan, say they will file a lawsuit asking Japan's nuclear watchdog to scrap the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in the prefecture.

The residents and their lawyers announced the plan at a news conference in Tokyo on Tuesday. They said they will bring the case to the Tokyo District Court on December 25th.

They called the reactor's operator, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, obviously unqualified.

Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority asked the science minister last month to replace the operator within about 6 months.

The regulator said the agency is unfit for the job, as it has failed to properly cope with safety problems at Monju.

One of the residents said continued operation of the reactor by the agency would seriously endanger people's lives.

The authority declined to comment on the planned lawsuit.

In a similar suit filed in 1985, a high court ruled in favor of residents. But the Supreme Court rejected their claim.

Miyazu: "We can in no way accept it"

December 10, 2015

Miyazu mayor in Kyoto Pref. opposes restart of Takahama nuclear reactors

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20151210/p2a/00m/0na/016000c>

KYOTO -- Miyazu Mayor Shoji Inoue in Kyoto Prefecture has voiced his opposition to the planned reactivation of the No. 3 and 4 reactors at the Takahama Nuclear Power Plant in the Fukui Prefecture town of Takahama.

"In the present circumstances, we can in no way accept it," Inoue told the city assembly on Dec. 8. Miyazu city is not granted the right to say "yes" or "no" to any plan to restart the Takahama nuclear plant although it is located within 30 kilometers from the atomic complex. It is the first time for a local chief executive of such a municipality to declare their opposition to reactivating the reactors.

Asked by a city assembly member about his view on the planned reactivation of the Takahama reactors during a question-and-answer session, Inoue said, "In light of the intentions of the city assembly and citizens, we can in no way accept it."

There are three prefectures and 12 municipalities that are located within 30 kilometers from the Takahama plant, and most of Miyazu city falls within the 30-kilometer zone. **Plant operator Kansai Electric Power Co., however, singled out the Fukui Prefecture town of Tahakama that hosts the nuclear plant and Fukui Prefecture as the only local bodies that can agree or disagree to reactivation of the Takahama reactors.**

Japanese agreement with India raises protests

December 12, 2015

Civic groups, A-bomb survivors blast Japan-India nuclear power deal

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/12/national/civic-groups-a-bomb-survivors-blast-japan-india-nuclear-power-deal/#.Vm1_nr8R-ov



Kyodo

Civic groups and atomic bomb survivors on Saturday criticized the Japanese government for agreeing with India to work toward sealing a civil nuclear cooperation pact, fearing the move might lead India to divert the technology to weapons production.

Some 150 civic group members and others gathered in front of the prime minister's office in Tokyo, holding banners such as **"We cannot create peace with nuclear"** and protesting, "We oppose the Japan-India nuclear deal."

A deal, which involves the export of Japanese nuclear power plant technology, is controversial because India, a nuclear-weapon nation that conducted its first nuclear test in 1974, has not joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The NPT only recognizes Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States as nuclear powers.

Kanna Mitsuta, a member of an environmental group called Friends of the Earth Japan, said the agreement "tramples" on nonproliferation efforts made by Japan, which had the bitter experience of suffering the devastation of U.S. atomic bombings during World War II.

S.P. Udayakumar, a leading figure in India's anti-nuclear movement, also joined the event via Skype, condemning Japan for trying to sell nuclear power even though its own people are struggling due to the 2011 Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster.

While admitting that the fast-growing Asian country needs electricity, he said people do not want it in the form of nuclear power.

People in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two Japanese cities reduced to ruins by U.S. atomic bombs in 1945, also expressed anger.

Hiroshi Shimizu, secretary general of the Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-Bomb Sufferers Organizations said, "We are not sure when India, for some reason, will seek to divert the technology to nuclear weapons."

"This move is intolerable for atomic bomb survivors because it goes against the government's position to seek the abolition of nuclear weapons," the 73-year-old Shimizu said.

Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue called the latest development “extremely regrettable,” noting that atomic bomb survivors’ groups and many others were against the civil nuclear cooperation pact.

“I strongly urge (the Japanese government) to fulfill its responsibility as a country subjected to nuclear weapons,” he said.

In India on Saturday, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in principle on concluding a civil nuclear cooperation pact, saying the deal will be signed after technical details are finalized.

India not a signatory of NPT



Activists of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and All India Students' Association (AISA) hold banners during a sit-in protest against the nuclear power talks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart, Shinzo Abe, in New Delhi, India, on Dec. 12. (AP Photo)

December 13, 2015

Japan's nuclear power deal in principle with India a first with an NPT non-signer

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201512130019

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's agreement in principle to supply nuclear power technology to India may run counter to Japan's stated commitment against the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The deal was reached on Dec. 12 during a meeting between Abe, who is visiting New Delhi, and his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi.

If an actual nuclear power agreement is signed, it would mark the first for Japan with a nation that has not signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The latest move by Japan was met swiftly with criticism in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui issued a statement on Dec. 12 asking that no nuclear power agreement with India be signed until it joined the NPT. The agreement reached between Abe and Modi "cannot be said to be in line with the position of maintaining the NPT structure by preventing its hollowing out," Matsui said.

Japan and India began negotiating a nuclear power agreement in 2010 when the Democratic Party of Japan was still in power. Japan had wanted a provision in any such deal that would allow it to immediately stop any nuclear power cooperation should India resume testing of nuclear weapons, which has been on hold since 1998.

Japan insisted on that position because of its goal of abolishing nuclear weapons, being the only nation in the world to have been subjected to the destructive power of such devices.

Although a joint declaration and a memorandum regarding a nuclear power agreement were released on Dec. 12, no provisions were included regarding a suspension of cooperation should India resume nuclear testing.

In the joint declaration, the two leaders confirmed that a nuclear power agreement would be signed after completion of the technological details through further negotiations between the two nations.

According to Japanese officials who briefed reporters, in his meeting with Modi, Abe said Japan would suspend cooperation if India resumed nuclear testing. Those officials said that reference would serve as a brake against India if it considered resumption of nuclear testing.

The move toward providing nuclear power technology with a nation that has not signed the NPT would be a major shift for Japan, which had emphasized nuclear nonproliferation until now.

At the same time, the Abe administration has placed the export of major infrastructure projects as a key pillar of its economic growth strategy, so it is eager to export nuclear power plant technology.

Before Abe's meeting with Modi, a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official said, "With the experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan is the only nation that has been hit by nuclear bombs and that is why Japan has pushed a nuclear nonproliferation diplomacy. We will not enter into an agreement that is not in line with that stance."

India has long insisted that it has the right to develop nuclear weapons. While it has announced a moratorium on nuclear testing, it apparently did not want to commit in writing any suspension of nuclear power cooperation should it ever resume nuclear testing.

This would not be the first time India has pushed for an agreement on nuclear power technology cooperation that did not contain a provision against nuclear testing.

India reached a similar deal with the United States in 2008. The United States has a domestic law that includes a provision that allows for suspension of nuclear power cooperation should nuclear testing be conducted.

The news of the latest agreement on Dec. 12 was criticized by Miyako Jodai, 76, who survived the atomic bombing of Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945. She linked the latest agreement with the 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

"The people of Fukushima are still suffering and spent nuclear fuel cannot be disposed of properly," Jodai said. "It is wrong to sell nuclear plant technology overseas by emphasizing only its safety and convenience."

(Kazuki Uechi and Yoshihiro Kando in New Delhi and Hajimu Takeda and Kaname Ohira in Tokyo contributed to this article.)

Miyagi "chosen" candidates refuse to host radioactive waste

December 14, 2015

3 Miyagi municipalities against hosting disposal sites for contaminated waste

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20151214/p2a/00m/0na/007000c>

SENDAI -- Three municipalities in Miyagi Prefecture that have been selected as candidates to host final disposal sites for radioactively contaminated materials told the Environment Ministry on Dec. 13 that they would relinquish their candidacies.

The Miyagi Prefecture towns of Kami and Taiwa as well as the city of Kurihara had been picked as candidate municipalities to host disposal sites for designated waste, which includes radioactively contaminated materials generated by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Kurihara Mayor Isamu Sato and Taiwa Mayor Hajimu Asano told a meeting of Miyagi Prefecture mayors in Sendai that they were unwilling to remain candidates with no prospect for construction in sight. Kami Mayor Hirobumi Inomata demanded that disposal sites be built in Fukushima Prefecture instead, saying, "All the three candidate sites are inappropriate."

The Environment Ministry, however, is reluctant to accept the municipalities' stance.

"We selected the three municipalities after a series of mayoral meetings to decide how to pick candidate sites. Given the process we have taken, the ministry cannot accept the municipalities' decision," a ministry official commented. The ministry is seeking renewed permission from the municipalities to survey the candidate sites in detail.

The Dec. 13 mayoral meeting was held at the request of the Environment Ministry. In the fall of last year, the ministry tried to conduct land surveys at the three candidate sites, but residents of Kami staged a protest against the plan.

Kurihara and Taiwa had responded positively to the plan, on the condition that assessments be conducted simultaneously in all three municipalities.

As the snowfall season has arrived in the candidate municipalities, however, for the second straight year, the Environment Ministry will be unable to carry out land surveys.

December 13, 2015

Miyagi municipalities refuse to be candidate sites

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Dec. 13, 2015 - Updated 19:12 UTC+1

The mayors of 3 municipalities in northeastern Japan have announced that they will no longer propose candidate sites for a radioactive waste disposal facility.

The announcement came after the Environment Ministry made a decision to postpone its plan to start onsite surveys of 3 proposed sites in Miyagi Prefecture by the end of the year because of local opposition.

The ministry has put off the surveys for 2 straight years.

The facility would dispose of radioactive sludge and ash from the 2011 meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

During Sunday's meeting, Kurihara City Mayor Isamu Sato said he has withdrawn an offer to host a candidate site. He said he will not accept any survey as there is no plausible explanation that would convince residents to go along with the proposal.

The mayors of Taiwa Town and Kami Town also said they are refusing to propose candidate sites.

State Minister of Environment Shinji Inoue also attended the meeting. As the ministry's second-highest ranking official, Inoue said he cannot accept the mayors' refusals.

He added that the ministry believes there is no choice but to build a safe facility in Miyagi to dispose of the radioactive waste.

CORE seeks Japanese support

December 17, 2015

Opponents of U.S. nuclear bomb 'glorification' park seek Japanese support

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201512170049

By MASATO TAINAKA/ Staff Writer

Residents who fell sick living near the facility that produced plutonium for the Nagasaki atomic bomb are seeking Japanese support for a campaign against an attraction in the United States that they say "glorifies" nuclear weapons.

The move by the group called Consequences of Radiation Exposure (CORE) follows the U.S. government's establishment on Nov. 10 of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park at three sites related to the development of the first atomic bombs used by the United States.

One of those sites is in Hanford, Washington state, which in 1945 produced the plutonium for the world's first nuclear test in Alamogordo, New Mexico, as well as in the bomb detonated over Nagasaki on Aug. 9, 1945.

"The intended purpose of this new park was to glorify the science behind the atomic bomb," said Trisha Pritikin, 65, a founding member of CORE and a lawyer whose father worked as an engineer at the Hanford facility. "We are fighting an uphill battle."

One of CORE's objectives is to collect donations to build a new museum in Seattle to focus on the negative consequences of the nuclear weapons development program and nuclear energy.

Tom Bailie, 68, a farmer near Hanford and CORE member, said: "Humans cannot co-exist with nuclear weapons or nuclear power plants. I want to build a museum with the people of Japan who are well aware of that."

CORE is comprised of people living near the Hanford site, like Bailie, who fell sick over the years, likely due to the radiation emitted from the facility.

Bailie has suffered from various health problems since childhood. At 18, he was diagnosed as being infertile. Family members have also died of cancer.

He has previously spoken to the media about what he calls "the death mile" near his home where there has been a high incidence of miscarriage, deformed babies, cancer and leukemia.

Bailie also appeared in the 2003 Japanese movie "Hibakusha--At the End of the World" about the survivors of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as Iraqi victims of depleted uranium shells, directed by Hitomi Kamanaka.

After World War II, the Hanford facility produced enough weapons-grade plutonium for about 7,000 bombs the same size as the one dropped on Nagasaki.

In 1986, the U.S. Energy Department released 19,000 pages of confidential documents in response to a freedom-of-information request made by local residents.

According to the documents, an experiment called "Green-run" at the Hanford site in December 1949 intentionally emitted 740 terabecquerels of radioactive xenon-133 and 287 terabecquerels of iodine-131. One tera is 1 trillion bequerels.

The area around the Hanford site was also contaminated with various radioactive elements during the Cold War. Work to decontaminate the site continued from 1989 after the facility shut down, but 177 underground tanks store large volumes of highly radioactive waste liquids that have not been processed at all.

Those residents living near the facility call themselves "downwinders" because they developed cancer and thyroid problems likely caused by wind-borne radioactive elements from the Hanford site.

Pritikin's parents both died of thyroid cancer and she herself suffers from headaches and gastrointestinal and thyroid problems. She said radiation from the Hanford site "killed him (my father), my mom, and, maybe, eventually me."

Since 1990, about 5,000 individuals, including many downwinders, have filed lawsuits against the companies contracted with the Department of Energy. Pritikin was one of those litigants, but courts never acknowledged a causal relationship between radiation and health problems. Many of the plaintiffs died before a verdict was even handed down.

The B reactor at Hanford that produced the plutonium used in the Nagasaki bomb has already been opened as a museum to the public. It will likely become the main attraction for the national historical park that officials want to be complete in around 2020, with the other Manhattan Project sites in Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The display at the Hanford B reactor now highlights the scientific achievements that gave birth to the nuclear age.

However, Norma Field, professor emeritus of East Asian studies at the University of Chicago who is also a CORE director, said other sides of the story should also be told.

"The history of the Manhattan Project cannot be passed off as a history of triumph. It is a history of widespread, continued suffering on the part of U.S. citizens," Field said.

"Hibakusha seeing themselves as part of a global history of exploitation and suffering through the CORE project would be an immense contribution."

Unjust and unacceptable

December 24, 2015

Residents' lawyer: Court decision unjust

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20151224_27.html

Dec. 24, 2015 - Updated 10:07 UTC+1

A lawyer for residents who sought an injunction to block the restart of 2 reactors at the Takahama plant has denounced Thursday's court decision as unjust.

Lawyer Hiroyuki Kawai said the Fukui District Court's decision to reverse an earlier injunction was extremely unjust and unacceptable.

He said the court refused to learn from the lessons of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident. He also said the court seems to have a foregone conclusion as it apparently considered the plant operator's schedule for restart.

Kawai expressed intent to immediately file an appeal of the case with a high court.

One of the residents who filed the case, Harumi Kondaiji, said she felt **indignant that the judge gave up being the guardian of the law and trampled on basic human rights.**

Kondaiji said she will turn her indignation to energy to further their fight against the restart.

Takahama restart & angry protestors

December 25, 2015-12-25

Anger, accusations of judicial failure after Fukui court OKs reactor restart

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20151225/p2a/00m/0na/015000c>



Local residents protest against a Fukui District Court decision to lift an injunction on the restart of the Takahama nuclear plant's No. 3 and 4 reactors, in Fukui, on Dec. 24, 2015. (Mainichi)

FUKUI -- On Dec. 24, about 250 people -- petitioners against the restart of the Takahama nuclear plant's No. 3 and 4 reactors, and their supporters -- were gathered outside the Fukui District Court building, waiting to hear if the judge would uphold an earlier injunction against the restarts. At just past 2 p.m., after the verdict was handed down, the petitioners' 65-year-old representative Harumi Kondaiji displayed a piece of paper that says, "They've learned nothing from the Fukushima nuclear disaster!" and "Where is the duty to justice?"

Presiding judge Jun Hayashi had overturned the provisional injunction imposed by another presiding judge Hideaki Higuchi in April, stating that there were "no shortcomings in the safety measures" at the Takahama nuclear station. Plant operator Kansai Electric Power Co. could go ahead with the reactor restarts.

A great sigh escaped the crowd, followed by loud and angry cries of protest. Attorney Hiroyuki Kawai, the 71-year-old co-leader of the legal team representing the anti-restart petitioners, took a microphone and mounted an upturned beer case.

"The court's decision is just a copy-and-paste of Kansai Electric's main claims, and is unacceptable," he told the angry crowd, his lips forming a tight line and his gaze dropping after his short speech.

Later, at a news conference in the city of Fukui, Kawai criticized the court's decision, which stated that the dangers presented by reactor core meltdowns and major releases of radioactive materials are small and can be ignored in light of common sense and which declined to evaluate an evacuation plan.

"Is the legality of the evacuation plan irrelevant?" he went on. "The court's decision runs counter to the policies of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) and the (Japanese) government; both pro-nuclear bodies. The court's decision is an outright denial of global thinking on multiple safeguards."

Also on the anti-restart legal team is 61-year-old attorney Kenichi Ido who, as a Kanazawa District Court judge in 2006, handed down a ruling banning operations at the No. 2 reactor at Hokuriku Electric Power

Co.'s Shika nuclear plant. Ido called the Dec. 24 Fukui court decision "a new nuclear safety myth. The judges did not fulfill their legal duty to stop legislative and administrative bodies from running amok." Harumi Kondaiji, who is also a municipal assembly member in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, read out a statement by his fellow petitioners, saying, "We will use the anger of this day as energy to continue the fight." Co-petitioner and Takatsuki, Osaka Prefecture resident Kiyoko Mito, 80, commented, "Restarting the reactors means creating more danger. I feel very sorry for the children."

The Takahama nuclear plant is close to Fukui Prefecture's borders with both Kyoto and Shiga prefectures, and the response to the district court ruling among the residents and government leaders of nearby municipalities has been varied.

Some 84,000 people in Maizuru, Kyoto Prefecture, live within 30 kilometers of the plant and would have to be evacuated in a major nuclear emergency -- the most of any municipality affected. One 51-year-old housewife living about 15 kilometers from the Takahama plant commented, "Does the (Fukui District Court) decision really take into account the risks of us losing our home towns, I wonder. The court doesn't understand the Fukushima disaster at all."

A 67-year-old local man, however, said that "stopping nuclear power indefinitely risks bringing on an energy shortage. If the plant has met all the safety standards, it's perfectly natural to restart the reactors." Maizuru Mayor Ryozi Tatami told the Mainichi Shimbun that he "respects the court's decision," but would make no further comment. Kyoto Gov. Keiji Yamada, meanwhile, pointed out that there are more people in his jurisdiction than in plant host Fukui Prefecture living inside the evacuation zone, and stated, "It's regrettable that our government was excluded from the (restart) approval process."

The Union of Kansai Governments approved a written demand to the central government for clarification of which local bodies needed to approve reactor restarts, as well as a guaranteed system for evacuating residents, among other requests. Shiga Gov. Taizo Mikazuki added a rider stating that "the circumstances to approve (reactor restarts) will not exist as long as no effective and multifaceted system of protections can be guaranteed."

Former Shiga Gov. Yukiko Kada, a vocal proponent of "leaving nuclear power behind," said the timing of Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa's approval of the Takahama restarts "looks almost story-like," noting that it came just before the Fukui District Court decision. "The independence of the judiciary is not being maintained."

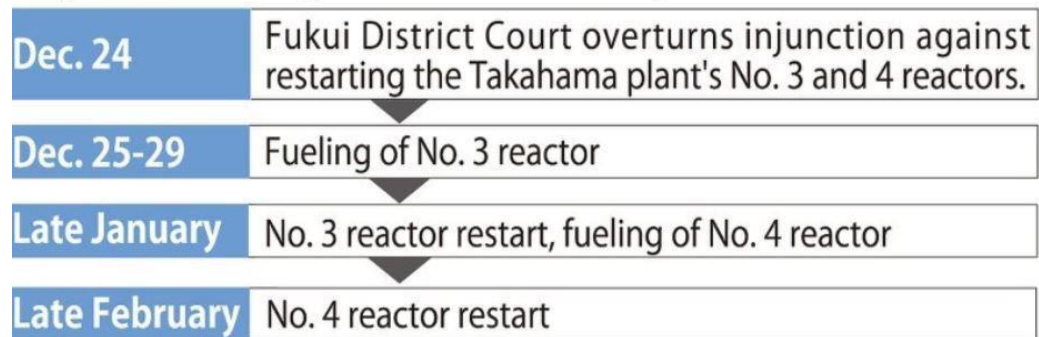
Anti-restart petitioners appeal to court

December 25, 2015

Long legal battle looms as petitioners appeal Fukui court's reactor restart ruling

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20151225/p2a/00m/0na/022000c>

Steps to restarting Takahama nuclear plant reactors 3 and 4



With the Fukui District Court's Dec. 24 decision to repeal a temporary injunction against the restart of two reactors at the Takahama nuclear station, the anti-restart petitioners are poised to appeal to the Kanazawa branch of the Nagoya High Court.

The petitioners -- residents of areas near the nuclear plant -- filed a so-called "preservation appeal" based on provisions of the Civil Provisional Remedies Act. If the high court recognizes the appeal, Takahama plant operator Kansai Electric Power Co. will once again be barred from restarting the two reactors. A ruling over a temporary injunction is handed down relatively quickly as the results otherwise can be impossible to undo if the case is not dealt with swiftly. Temporary injunction rulings take instant effect, and dissatisfied parties can register an objection right away at the same court that issued the original decision.

Proceedings are then held to determine the validity of the protest. There are no rules on which judge can preside over these proceedings. In the Takahama nuclear plant case, however, three judges not involved in the initial decision made the determination. These rulings, too, take instant effect, meaning that the decision to drop the injunction immediately opened the way for the reactors to be restarted.

If the high court's decision over the petitioners' appeal was found to be violating the Constitution or legal precedent, the case could be appealed to the Supreme Court, raising the possibility of a long legal battle ahead.

Residents file suit to revoke Monju permit

December 25, 2015

Residents take troubled Monju reactor to court

Dec. 25, 2015 - Updated 11:06 UTC+1

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20151225_28.html

A group of local residents has filed a suit asking Japan's nuclear regulator to revoke the permit for a prototype fast-breeder reactor in Fukui Prefecture.

106 plaintiffs from Fukui and neighboring prefectures brought the case to the Tokyo District Court on

Friday.

The prototype fast-breeder reactor Monju was designed to produce more nuclear fuel than it consumes. It was expected to be part of Japan's fuel recycling system. But the reactor has been mostly idle since a leak of its sodium coolant 20 years ago.

In the past few years, the Monju operator has been repeatedly criticized for its lax safety management, such as failing to inspect thousands of items.

Last month the Nuclear Regulation Authority asked the science minister to replace the plant's operator within about 6 months.

The plaintiffs say the current operator, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, lacks the necessary qualifications for a permit to run the plant. They say the reactor should be scrapped.

One of the plaintiffs, Tetsuen Nakajima, said it is not enough for the government just to replace the plant operator in name. He stressed the government should fundamentally reconsider the nuclear plants and fuel recycling policies.

In a similar suit filed in 1985, a high court ruled in favor of the residents. But the Supreme Court rejected the claim.

The nuclear regulator declined to comment on the lawsuit, saying they have yet to receive a letter of complaint.

What was learned from Fukushima?

December 25, 2015

Moves to restart Takahama reactors have Fukushima evacuees asking, 'What was learned?'

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201512250049>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

With the Takahama nuclear power plant getting the green light for a restart, evacuees from Fukushima Prefecture are asking if anything was learned from their plight following the 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

"I feel the Fukushima accident has become something that lies totally in the past," said Atsuko Fukushima, 43, who fled from Minami-Soma and now resides in Kizugawa, Kyoto Prefecture.

Work began on Dec. 25 to transport nuclear fuel into the Takahama plant, operated by Kansai Electric Power Co.

The move follows a court decision the previous day lifting an injunction against restarting two nuclear reactors at the plant.

If everything proceeds along the schedule set by Kansai Electric, one of the Takahama reactors could resume operations in late January.

Fukushima referred to the Dec. 24 ruling in Fukui District Court that overturned the injunction against the Takahama plant restart issued by the same court, but a different presiding judge, only eight months earlier.

"I cannot understand why there was a divergence in the decisions made by the judicial system," she said.

"If the courts approve reactor restarts and those orders are carried out, there is the possibility of new victims appearing who have to go through what we did."

Fukushima is one of a group of plaintiffs that filed lawsuits in Kyoto District Court seeking compensation for evacuees from the nuclear accident as well as to order an injunction against the Oi nuclear power plant, also operated by Kansai Electric in Fukui Prefecture.

Osamu Kojimoto, 46, a farmer in Sabae, Fukui Prefecture, voluntarily moved from Nihonmatsu, Fukushima Prefecture, even though he lived about 50 kilometers from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

He felt anger and lacked confidence in the comment issued by Fukui Governor Issei Nishikawa about allowing for the Takahama restarts because the central government would assume ultimate responsibility.

"It is important for residents to think about this issue from normal times and collect information," Kojimoto said. "I want to continue talking about my experience in evacuating."

Second lawsuit against NRA (Monju)

December 26, 2015

NRA targeted in second lawsuit against Monju reactor experiment

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/12/26/national/locals-others-seeking-monju-decommissioning-file-suit-nra/#.Vn6gillR-id>

JIIJ, Staff Report

Residents near the experimental Monju fast-breeder reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, are suing the Nuclear Regulation Authority to have the installation permit canceled.

On Friday, 106 people in 12 prefectures who live within 250 km of Monju filed suit at the Tokyo District Court, claiming the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, the manager of the trouble-prone prototype reactor, is unable to run it safely.

It is the second time residents have taken **legal action to decommission the experimental reactor**. The first attempt failed at the Supreme Court in 2005.

Among the plaintiffs this time are some from the first lawsuit and some forced to evacuate by the March 2011 triple core meltdown at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s disaster-hit Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

The JAEA was established after a sodium leak accident and coverup bid at Monju in 1995 that forced the facility to close. After operations resumed in 2010, they were suspended again the same year after a massive fuel-exchanging device fell into the reactor, blocking access to the fuel rods.

Japan has reportedly spent more than ¥1 trillion on the Monju project to find a way to reliably produce more nuclear fuel than it uses.

Following the discovery of further problems, including large-scale inspection flaws, the NRA last month called for the manager, JAEA, to be replaced.

This month, the science and technology ministry, which has jurisdiction over JAEA, set up a panel to discuss the future of the experimental facility.

Tetsuen Nakajima, one of the plaintiffs, expressed **doubts about the panel's veracity, saying its members do not include anyone critical of the fast-breeder reactor.**

The 73-year-old resident of Obama, Fukui Prefecture, added he hopes the lawsuit will lead to a thorough public debate on Monju.

First association of Fukushima plaintiffs

December 27, 2015

Fukushima disaster plaintiffs to form association

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Dec. 27, 2015 - Updated 05:06 UTC+1

Japanese people who are suing the central government and an electric power utility over the Fukushima nuclear disaster will form their first association.

The move comes ahead of the 5th anniversary next March of the nuclear meltdowns.

Plaintiffs of class-action lawsuits living in and outside Fukushima are demanding compensation from the national government and Tokyo Electric Power Company, or TEPCO, in at least 18 prefectures.

The plaintiffs and lawyers from about 10 groups took part in a preparatory meeting in Tokyo earlier this month. They decided to **work together to prevent memories of the accident from fading away.**

The new group plans to call for stronger relief measures for residents. It intends to inaugurate in February and **aims to gather 10,000 members.**

The leader of one group, Yuya Kamoshita, says **radioactive contamination continues to pose a threat.** He says he wants to cooperate with others ahead of this turning point, 5 years after the accident.

Takahama restart based on "unmet conditions, weak promises"

December 28, 2015

EDITORIAL: Approval to restart Takahama reactors based on unmet conditions, weak promises

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/views/editorial/AJ201512280015>

The Fukui District Court recently nullified its earlier injunction against reactivating the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors of the Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Kansai Electric Power Co., operator of the nuclear plant in the town of Takahama, is expected to restart one of the two reactors as early as late January.

But the procedure for obtaining the approval of the hosting government of Fukui Prefecture, which was completed immediately before the court decision, was laden with problems. We oppose moves to press ahead with the planned restarts under the current circumstances.

Fifteen nuclear reactors are concentrated in Fukui Prefecture, including some for which decisions have been made for decommissioning.

Fukui Governor Issei Nishikawa set five conditions for his approval, calling on the central government and Kansai Electric to clearly pinpoint their responsibilities.

Public opinion has consistently been cautious about restarting nuclear reactors following the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. Nishikawa called strongly on the central government to “promote public understanding,” and he obtained Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s assurances that he will ensure that meetings with residents will be held across Japan for that purpose.

The governor called on Kansai Electric to precisely explain when it plans to build an interim storage facility outside Fukui Prefecture for spent nuclear fuel. The utility said in November that it will locate the site for the facility around 2020 and have it operational around 2030.

Nishikawa said he believes that all his conditions have been met. But the substantiality of those commitments remains questionable.

Kansai Electric has said it hopes to install an interim storage facility somewhere in the Kansai region, and it has long been canvassing local governments for their understanding. But resistance to hosting such a facility remains strong, and the building site is not likely to be selected any time soon. There is no denying suspicions that the plan could end up as an empty promise.

Questions also remain on the extent to which Nishikawa has fulfilled his own responsibilities.

He has never had the prefectural government organize meetings with local residents, saying it is up to the central government and the plant operators to explain the safety and necessity of nuclear plants.

An emergency evacuation plan for areas within a 30-kilometer radius of the Takahama nuclear plant was only worked out earlier this month. That zone contains parts of Kyoto and Shiga prefectures and has a total population of about 180,000.

But Nishikawa approved the planned restarts without waiting for a drill held across prefectural borders, arguing that working out an emergency evacuation plan is not a legal requisite for restarting a nuclear reactor.

Obtaining the host communities’ approval for a reactor restart should primarily be a process to enhance the safety and peace of mind of local residents.

It is all too regretful that another undesirable example has been set, following the earlier approvals to restart the Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture and the Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture.

The central government was also quite candid in postulating that restarting nuclear reactors is a foregone conclusion. Industry minister Motoo Hayashi visited Fukui, the capital of Fukui Prefecture, four days before the court decision to ask Nishikawa for his approval.

The local governments and residents of communities adjacent to nuclear plants are strongly dissatisfied that they have no say in decisions on reactor restarts. Kansai Electric has rejected the demands of the Kyoto and Shiga prefectural governments for inclusion on the list of “hosting communities,” whose approvals are required for restarting reactors of the Takahama nuclear plant. The central government has only been looking on, arguing that approvals of the hosting communities are not a legal requirement.

Abe has said he will provide explanations to gain the public’s understanding of the importance of nuclear power generation. That leads us to believe that he should also be presenting guidelines on the extent and coverage of the “hosting communities,” whose approvals are necessary for nuclear restarts.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Dec. 27

Ugaya Hirochimi

<http://queenmobs.com/2015/06/an-interview-with-hiromichi-ugaya-a-photojournalist-documenting-fukushima/>

A 25-minute interview (in English) with Ugaya Hirochimi, a photojournalist who has visited Fukushima many times since the disaster. <https://youtu.be/EbUUhk4uoAc>

Ugaya has also published a book of photographs, to try and fight the growing oblivion surrounding the aftermath of 3/11:

***Portrait of Fukushima: 2011-2015: Life After Meltdown* can be purchased here.**

Next generation to keep up fight for abolition of nuclear arms

January 11, 2016

Japanese student activist to keep up lifelong fight against nuclear arms

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/11/national/japanese-student-activist-keep-lifelong-fight-nuclear-arms/#.VpSwvFIR-ov>

by Miya Tanaka
Kyodo

YOKOHAMA – For aging atomic bomb survivors, it is a matter of grave concern whether their long-running campaign to see the abolition of nuclear weapons will be continued by the next generation, and just as important to them as passing on their memories of the 1945 bombings.

They may have a ray of hope in a 23-year-old descendant of an atomic bomb survivor who is working for a better future through a range of activities, most recently as a member of the student group that spearheaded last year's protests against the security laws.

Mitsuhiro Hayashida is one of the founding members of SEALDs (Students Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy-s), which was launched in May, and has also been deeply committed since his teenage days to the effort to ban nuclear weapons.

"What drives me in my current actions are the words of the hibakusha I have heard all my life," the senior student at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo told the audience at an event in October to oppose the security laws and nuclear arms.

Born in Nagasaki, Hayashida has been immersed in local peace education since his childhood and grew up listening to the accounts of people who survived the city's bombing, including his grandfather, who entered the city shortly after the blast and handled dead bodies.

Hayashida was devoted during his high school years to campaigning in and outside Japan against nuclear weapons. He was selected as a High School Student Peace Ambassador in 2009 out of some 110 applicants to promote nuclear abolition around the world.

Hayashida recalled in a recent interview that it was not only a sense of responsibility that motivated him in his activities.

"I was actually enjoying them because I could learn a lot of things by talking with various people and traveling overseas. It gave me a chance to escape from the school's closed atmosphere," he said.

His life took another turn following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis, which began the day after he moved to Yokohama to enroll in university.

Realizing that civilian use of nuclear power can expose people to radiation just like atomic bombs, Hayashida was drawn to protests in front of the prime minister's office in 2012. These demonstrations also drew the other youths who would go on to form SEALDs, such as the group's leading figure, Aki Okuda, who was also attending Meiji Gakuin University.

While Hayashida's current focus is on repealing the security laws that passed the Diet in September, expanding the role of the Self-Defense Forces overseas, he believes the activities of SEALDs are also connected to his mission to abolish nuclear weapons.

"I think debating national security issues will eventually lead to (the question of whether we need) atomic bombs, so in my mind these two issues are linked," he said.

As the debate over the security laws heightened awareness among the public about issues of war and peace, it might have been a good chance for the campaign against nuclear weapons to gain steam.

Hayashida said that didn't happen because of deep-seated divisions between the organizations leading the effort for abolishing nuclear arms.

"I have grown up under the influence of existing peace groups and I respect what they have done over the past decades, but I'm also fed up with their ideological conflicts," he said.

Movements in Japan to ban nuclear weapons emerged in the 1950s, but a key group launched in 1955 split over differences on whether to back the Soviet Union's nuclear testing, resulting in the birth of another group. Since then, the two major anti-nuclear organizations have rarely acted together.

Hayashida has explored his own ways to stir up interest among his fellow university students and other youths by organizing tours to Nagasaki and the other atomic-bombed city, Hiroshima, every summer since 2011. He also frequently speaks at events at the request of peace groups.

Hayashida, who plans to continue his study of atomic bomb survivors in graduate school, is eager to continue advocating the abolition of nuclear weapons in the future, said he also wants to “create” a new movement with the power to appeal to young people.

He may not have to shoulder the burden of peace campaigning alone, as many youths in Japan now appear to be breaking out of their general image of political apathy.

“What SEALDs has done is it really lowered the threshold (for campaigning against political issues). And I don’t think this change is temporary,” Hayashida said.

The group’s hip style of protest — featuring rap slogans and flashy pamphlets to get its message across — succeeded in attracting young people to demonstrations, which had been characterized by graying people mobilized by labor unions or groups linked to left-wing parties.

SEALDs is expected to disband following the Upper House election this summer, when it will campaign to oust the ruling bloc from power, but Hayashida said he gets excited when he thinks how being a part of SEALDs may affect young people after they finish being students and “go out into the world.”

Positive effects already seem to be emerging.

Mayuu Takahashi, 19, said she has established a “peace action” group at Rikkyo University to join movements to oppose the security laws.

“I didn’t talk about political issues to people around me before, but I have been encouraged to be vocal by seeing SEALDs and scholars and other people,” Takahashi said as she took part in an anti-war march Dec. 6. “I want to continue engaging in these kinds of movements even after SEALDs disbands.”

Restart of MOX reactor in densely populated region



Residents and activists on Jan. 24 protest the planned resumption of operations at the Takahama nuclear power plant in Takahama, Fukui Prefecture. (Eijiro Morii)

Plutothermal reactor in Fukui Prefecture expected to restart on Jan. 29

January 26, 2016

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201601260034

By HIROKI ITO/ Staff Writer

For the first time since the Fukushima nuclear disaster unfolded, a plutonium-thermal (plutothermal) reactor is scheduled to restart on Jan. 29 **in a densely populated region with Japan's largest concentration of nuclear reactors.**

Kansai Electric Power Co. submitted its plans for the No. 3 reactor at its Takahama nuclear power plant in Takahama, Fukui Prefecture, to the Nuclear Regulation Authority on Jan. 25.

A restart of that reactor would be the third under the NRA's stricter safety regulations that were compiled after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in 2011.

The No. 3 plutothermal reactor at the Takahama plant uses mixed oxide (MOX) fuel, which contains plutonium extracted from spent nuclear fuel.

Plutothermal reactors are crucial components in the government's ambitious, expensive and problem-plagued nuclear fuel cycle project.

Twenty-four of the 157 fuel rods delivered to the No. 3 reactor last month consisted of MOX fuel.

The utility will test the control rods used to regulate the nuclear reaction of the fuel on the morning of Jan. 29. If the NRA deems everything is functioning properly after a final safety check, the operator will remove the control rods and boot up the reactor on the afternoon of that day at the earliest.

Kansai Electric hopes to start commercial operations of the reactor in late February.

The area around Wakasa Bay hosts 13 nuclear power plants, with the Takahama plant located at the west end of the chain.

About 180,000 people reside in 12 municipalities of Fukui, Kyoto and Shiga prefectures within a 30-kilometer radius of the plant.

The NRA in February last year cleared the No. 3 and 4 reactors at the Takahama plant for a resumption of operations.

However, residents around the plant sought a court injunction against the reactor restarts. In April 2015, the Fukui District Court ordered Kansai Electric to keep the two reactors offline.

A different judge of the same court lifted the injunction in December, allowing Kansai Electric to restart the plant for the first time in three years and 11 months, following a suspension of operations for a periodic checkup in February 2012.

The utility also plans to restart the No. 4 reactor at the Takahama plant.

Kansai Electric will start loading nuclear fuel to the No. 4 reactor on Jan. 31 at the earliest. It hopes to fire up the reactor by late February and restart commercial power generation in late March.

All nuclear power facilities were shut down after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami set off the nuclear crisis in Fukushima Prefecture in March 2011.

The No. 1 and No. 2 reactors at the Sendai nuclear power plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, resumed operations last August after being cleared by the NRA.

Naoto Kan: Disaster not over by a long shot

January 28, 2016

Fukushima nuclear crisis far from over, Kan says

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/28/national/politics-diplomacy/fukushima-nuclear-crisis-far-kan-says/#.Vq3VjIKDmot>

Kyodo

WASHINGTON – Former Prime Minister Naoto Kan said Tuesday the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant is not over five years since a massive earthquake and tsunami triggered the meltdowns. “There is no doubt” radioactive materials have been seeping into the sea after mixing with groundwater, Kan, who has been a vocal critic of nuclear energy since the crisis started, told the National Press Club in Washington.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has repeatedly said the issue of water contaminated with radioactive substances at the Fukushima plant is “under control,” including when he was making a pitch for Tokyo as host of the 2020 Olympic Games.

Kan disputes this. “**The accident is still unfolding,**” he said.

Kan was prime minister when the world’s worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl occurred following the massive earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011.

Kan, a lawmaker of the Democratic Party of Japan, also criticized Abe's decision to raise the ratio of electricity produced by atomic energy to 20-22 percent of the nation's total output by 2030. "The goal is not achievable" unless Japan extends the maximum legal period of reactor operations or builds a new nuclear plant, Kan said.

Most nuclear reactors remain off line in Japan, but various operators are seeking restarts.

Kansai Electric Power Co. is set to reactivate a reactor at its Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture on Friday, in what would be the third restart since new safety standards were put in place.

Tetsuji Imanaka, last of "Kumatori 6", retires

January 27, 2016

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160127/p2a/00m/0na/020000c>

Leading anti-nuclear power researcher announces retirement



Tetsuji Imanaka (Mainichi)

Tetsuji Imanaka, the only remaining member of the "Kumatori 6" -- a group of researchers at the Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute whose work has focused upon the dangers of nuclear power -- will retire at the end of March, although he will continue studying such matters as radioactive contamination due to the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster.

Imanaka, 65, an assistant professor with the institute -- which is located in the town of Kumatori, Osaka Prefecture -- is a leading authority on the 1986 nuclear power disaster in Chernobyl in the former Soviet Union. **He will deliver a retirement lecture on related matters on Feb. 10 in conjunction with an independent course begun by his research group, which is titled the "Seminar on the safety-related problems of nuclear power."**

The "Kumatori 6" is a study group that was initiated by six anti-nuclear researchers, who included Hiroaki Koide and Keiji Kobayashi in addition to Imanaka. Their nuclear safety-related seminars have been made available to members of the general public.

Imanaka, who became the research group's final working member following Koide's retirement last year in March, is originally from the city of Hiroshima. He lost his grandmother to the atomic bombing, and his mother was also herself a hibakusha.

He went on to enter the nuclear power engineering department at Osaka University -- a decision he described as "having nothing to do with (his background)." He explained, rather, that the subject "seemed interesting insofar as it utilized the latest technologies."

Later finishing graduate school at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Imanaka became an assistant with the Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute in 1976.

Harboring suspicions about the nature of nuclear power development, however, he began concentrating his research toward making contributions that would lead to the cessation of nuclear power use.

Imanaka traveled to Chernobyl in 1990, and Takeshi Seo, another one of the six researchers, came along as his assistant. Imanaka went on to return to Chernobyl over 20 times in order to conduct surveys.

Following the nuclear power disaster in Fukushima Prefecture on March 11, 2011, Imanaka traveled to the prefectural village of Iitate -- which later became a planned evacuation zone -- within the month in order to conduct measurements of radioactive contamination. He also went on to continue providing local residents with information necessary for making decisions.

Registration has already closed for next month's seminar, which more than 140 persons signed up to attend.

Questions regarding his academic lecture should be directed toward the research institute at 072-451-2300.

Two governors regret restart

January 29, 2016

Governors criticize reactor restart

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/20160130_08.html

Jan. 29, 2016 - Updated 22:24 UTC+1

The governors of two neighboring prefectures near the Takahama nuclear plant have expressed regret over Friday's reactor restart without their consent.

Kansai Electric Power Company restarted the plant in Fukui Prefecture. It was the third reactor in Japan to restart under new government regulations introduced after the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident.

Part of Shiga prefecture is within 30 kilometer radius of the plant. Governor Taizo Mikazuki said on Friday that he cannot approve the restart.

He said his prefecture has been insisting that an effective, in-depth protection plan for handling a nuclear crisis be established.

Mikazuki said his prefecture will strengthen its call for the government and the utility to implement more safety measures at the plant.

Kyoto Governor Keiji Yamada told reporters that part of his prefecture is located within a radius of 5 kilometers of the nuclear station. He said it's regrettable that his prefecture was excluded from the approval process for the plant's restart.

In the prefecture hosting the plant, Fukui Governor Issei Nishikawa urged the government to do more to explain to residents the importance and necessity of nuclear power generation.

Nishikawa said the operator needs to disclose more information, and that his prefecture will enhance monitoring of the plant to ensure the safety of its residents.

Last of Kumatori group retires

February 6, 2016

Defiant to the end, last of Group of Six anti-nuclear scientists about to retire

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201602060033>

By HISASHI HATTORI/ Senior Staff Writer

KUMATORI, Osaka Prefecture--Tetsuji Imanaka is the last of the so-called Kumatori Group of Six, a maverick band of nuclear scientists at an elite university here that spent decades speaking out against nuclear energy.

At 65, Imanaka is now ready to collect his pension and part company with **Kyoto University's Research Reactor Institute**--and he remains as steadfast as ever in his beliefs.

Imanaka cannot have found it easy to go against the government's policy of promoting nuclear power, yet that's what he's done since he joined the institute in 1976.

He says he never experienced harassment, but then again he never got promoted beyond the post of research associate.

"Many people have commented that I must have been bullied because I banded together with my colleagues under the banner of building a nuclear-free Japan," Imanaka told a 60-strong audience gathered here Jan. 28 for a lecture to mark his retirement in March. "But that was not the case. It is also true, though, that nobody has praised me for being anti-nuclear," he added, drawing guffaws.

Imanaka's other colleagues in the group with the exception of one are all retired. They are: Toru Ebisawa, 77; Keiji Kobayashi, 76; Takeshi Seo, who died in 1994 at the age of 53; Shinji Kawano, 74; and Hiroaki Koide, 66.

The group's moniker came from the name of the town that hosts the research center.

Although all six scientists harbored doubts about promoting nuclear energy, Imanaka said, "We did not set out to become activists or form a clique."

Rather, "We acted according to our own beliefs as individuals."

The group was relatively unknown before the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

But in the aftermath of the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, the "rebels" increasingly came under the spotlight as civic groups scrambled to seek their expertise to grasp the ramifications of the nuclear accident and the potential dangers of nuclear energy.

Koide, who retired last year, has addressed 300 or so gatherings across the country since the catastrophe. But the group's efforts to educate the public about the potential danger of, and challenges facing nuclear energy, date back to 1980 when it initiated a series of seminars at the institute.

"Experts have a responsibility to explain science and technology in lay language to citizens," Imanaka said of the endeavor.

With Imanaka's departure, those seminars are about to end. After more than 35 years, the final 112nd session will be held on Feb. 10.

The group's commitment to continue sounding the warning against nuclear power has been widely appreciated by the public at large.

But the members have all had to pay a price for openly defying the "nuclear village," as the program involving the government, powerful utilities enjoying regional monopolies and academia is called.

None of the six ever got promoted to beyond the level of assistant professor.

Still, Koide, who finished his career also as a research associate, recalled his academic life fondly.

In his lowly position, he was able to focus on his research free from pressure and harassment.

The catalyst for the group's anti-nuclear activities was a lawsuit filed in 1973 by a citizens group over a license issued to Shikoku Electric Power Co. to build the Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture.

In the suit, the plaintiffs demanded nullification of the license on grounds that safety screening of the plant by the government was insufficient. It was the nation's first lawsuit involving the safety of a nuclear reactor.

The researchers stood by the plaintiffs over 19 years of court battles, offering their technical expertise and testimony, right up until the Supreme Court finalized the verdict against them.

Kobayashi, an expert on reactors, also helped residents who sought to shut down the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in Fukui Prefecture.

The money-guzzling, problem-plagued project is the centerpiece of the government's vision to recycle spent nuclear fuel. But the reactor has rarely operated since it went online in 1995.

Imanaka specialized in assessing the spread of radioactive contamination. He traveled to Ukraine more than 20 times to examine the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident site for contamination.

He, along with Seo, also estimated how much radiation was released in the 1979 accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in the United States.

After the Fukushima disaster, Imanaka embarked on a project to detect radiation levels in Iitate, a village to the northwest of the plant whose residents are still living as evacuees due to high radiation levels.

Keiji Miyazaki, professor emeritus of nuclear energy at Osaka University, was of two minds about the goals of the Kumatori Group of Six.

"We, as a promoter of nuclear power, could learn from the argument they made on scientific grounds," said Miyazaki, 78, who assisted in the development of the Monju fast-breeder reactor. "But at times, they rather seemed to be activists than researchers."

The Fukushima disaster showed that a nuclear accident far exceeding anyone's expectations can happen in Japan, which is what the Kumatori Group of Six had been saying all along, despite the pro-nuclear power bloc always ruling it out as improbable.

Still, Koide said he was left with a "sense of defeat" because he and his peers failed to prevent it after all. Five years on, the toll from the disaster continues.

Some 100,000 evacuees in Fukushima Prefecture are still displaced.

Kobayashi is pushing for a nationwide debate over whether Japan should embrace nuclear energy.

"It has been established that an accident can take place," he said. "All of society, not just some officials and experts, should discuss whether we should continue to accept the risks involved in nuclear energy."

The final session of the seminar will bring together Imanaka and the surviving members of the group together for the first time in a long while.

They will pose for a picture with the photo of the late Seo in the background and renew their resolve to carry on their mission to serve the public with their technical knowledge.

"The next seminar will be the last one at the institute, but we are ready to come together and fulfill our responsibility as nuclear scientists if an accident like Fukushima recurs," Imanaka said.

Thank you, Conception Picciotto

February 13, 2016

Paying tribute to anti-nuclear activist who sat in front of White House for 35 years

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160213/p2a/00m/0na/013000c>

NEW YORK -- A petit woman who sat in front of the White House for 35 years since 1981 to protest against nuclear weapons died on Jan. 25. Her name was Concepcion Picciotto. She was believed to be 80 years old when she died. U.S. newspapers called her peace demonstration **the longest-running political protest in U.S. history.**

Picciotto was a Spanish immigrant. After her marriage failed, she lost custody of her adopted daughter. Left broken-hearted, she met an American anti-nuclear activist and decided to engage in an anti-nuclear protest herself, thinking that though she was helpless to do anything for her own child, she should **at least work toward protecting children in the world from destruction.**

The pair began a peace vigil just in front of the building where the leader of the world's biggest nuclear power lived. They built a simple demonstration base made with a beach umbrella and a plastic sheet. To the side of their protest base were signboards with photos of the atomic bombed Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Except when she would visit her supporters' places to shower or other necessary reasons, Picciotto was always there.

Even after her activist partner passed away in 2009, Picciotto continued to speak of the terror of nuclear weapons to tourists from around the world.

In a 2015 survey conducted by Japan's public broadcaster NHK, only 30 percent of respondents across Japan could correctly answer the dates of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. Even in Japan, the only country in the world to have been attacked by A-bombs, the memory of the devastation is fading away, and I wonder how indifferent other parts of the world are toward nuclear armament.

Picciotto's long years of devotion to her anti-nuclear protest are all the more precious now that people's interest in the issue is fading.

Steven Leeper, former chairman of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, has told me that **Picciotto was doing what everyone should have been doing together**. Every time he flew to Washington D.C., he would go see the woman he called his hero. Leeper has handed Picciotto a thank you letter from the city of Hiroshima for her activities.

I myself talked to Picciotto a few times when I was a correspondent based in Washington D.C. As a journalist representing a newspaper from the atomic bombed country, I wanted to write down about a woman who told me that one must sacrifice something in order to reach their goal. (By Kazuhiko Kusano, New York Bureau)

NHK nukes survey

February 11, 2016

NHK survey: Half want to reduce nuclear reactors

<http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/english/news/nuclear.html>

Feb. 11, 2016 - Updated 14:10 UTC+1

Nearly half the respondents in an NHK survey believe Japan should reduce the number of nuclear reactors in the country.

NHK conducted the survey last December, ahead of the 5th anniversary of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant on March 11th, 2011. More than 2,500 people responded.

The poll asked what the government's stance should be on nuclear reactors.

Three percent replied that the number of reactors should be increased, and 26 percent said it should be kept at the current level.

Forty-nine percent said the number of reactors should be reduced, while 22 percent said they should all be scrapped.

The survey also asked people about **the importance of high-level nuclear waste disposal when discussing the future of nuclear power generation.**

Fifty-two percent said they consider it very important, and 35 percent said they care about it to some extent. Ten percent said they do not think too much about the matter, and 2 percent said they give it no consideration.

If you love your country, let nuclear go!

February 12, 2016

http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2987146/fukushima_pm_naoto_kan_if_you_love_your_country_let_nuclear_go.html

Fukushima PM Naoto Kan: 'if you love your country, let nuclear go!'

Linda Pentz Gunter

Nuclear power is a uniquely hazardous technology that can destroy entire nations, Japan's prime minister at the time of the Fukushima nuclear disaster has warned British MPs. The lessons of from such catastrophes must be heeded in other countries that believe that nuclear fission can be harnessed safely, writes Linda Pentz Gunter - or they, and the world, will reap the whirlwind.

One quarter of the country's population would have had to flee if all the fuel had escaped at Fukushima. We came that close. If 50 million people had had to evacuate Japan, as a state our very survival would have been questioned.

It's widely agreed here in the rapidly Disuniting States of America that the most notorious of the Republican presidential candidates have not only abandoned, but torn up the rulebook of acceptable behavior. Lies, taunts, profanities all have become the norm.

But what if one of those candidates promised, if elected, to risk the death or permanent exile of a quarter of the country's population? That would surely evoke the well-used slur of the Right: 'unpatriotic!' And insane, you say. Except that being certifiably unhinged doesn't seem to be a disqualifying factor in US presidential campaigns these days. Still: purposely putting your electorate at risk when other choices are open to you certainly smacks of treachery.

In the normal scheme of things, leaders of nations don't set out to deliberately wreck their countries, although arguably some have made political choices that have done precisely that.

It's therefore no coincidence that the leaders at the time of the two countries that have experienced the world's most catastrophic nuclear disasters, are fervent campaigners against any further use of nuclear energy.

They see the choice to continue with nuclear power, knowing the risk to the nation they swear an oath to protect, as tantamount to declaring war on your own country.

Former leaders during nuclear meltdowns, now oppose nuclear power

Former Soviet Premier, Mikhail Gorbachev, who led the then USSR during the April 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion in Ukraine; and Naoto Kan who was prime minister of Japan when the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster began, both now travel the speakers' circuit extolling the need to abolish nuclear power.

Kan, now 69, who resigned the premiership in August 2011, has become a ubiquitous and compelling voice for the global anti-nuclear movement. Gorbachev is equally on board but, due to age and infirmity (he turns 85 on March 2nd) is less often in evidence.

Kan made his case in January during a presentation at the UK's House of Commons co-organized by Nuclear Free Local Authorities, Green Cross International (the group Gorbachev founded) and Nuclear Consulting Group. Gorbachev was scheduled but had to cancel.

Kan compared the potential worst-case devastation that could be caused by a nuclear power plant meltdown as tantamount only to *"a great world war. Nothing else has the same impact."*

Japan escaped such a dire fate during the Fukushima disaster, said Kan only *"due to luck"*. But he is clearly haunted by the map his advisors showed him in the early days of the still unfolding triple meltdowns, one he screened for his London audience:

"I was shown this map with a 250km radius around Fukushima. An area home to 50 million people. One quarter of the country's population would have had to flee if all the fuel had escaped at Fukushima. We came that close. If 50 million people had had to evacuate Japan, as a state our very survival would have been questioned."

The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few

Even so, Kan had to make some steely-nerved decisions that necessitated putting all emotion aside. In a now famous phone call from Tepco, when the company asked to pull all their personnel from the out-of-control Fukushima site for their own safety, Kan told them no. The workforce must stay. The few would need to make the sacrifice to save the many.

Kan knew that abandoning the Fukushima Daiichi site would cause radiation levels in the surrounding environment to soar, in turn forcing the evacuation of the neighbouring, and still functioning, Fukushima-Daiini nuclear site.

With all 10 Fukushima reactors and 11 spent fuel pools untended, there would be multiple meltdowns and the likely ignition of nuclear waste in onsite storage ponds, cascading into an unending radiological disaster. Kan would be ordering that most dreaded 250km evacuation, including the city of Tokyo.

His insistence that the Tepco workforce remain at Fukushima was perhaps one of the most unsung moments of heroism in the whole sorry saga.

It was then, said Kan, who trained as a physicist, that his whole energy perspective was forever altered. *"It was a moment when my view on nuclear power changed 180 degrees."* Sticking with the nuclear energy path meant that *"the country would go down in ruin."* He could no longer in all conscience *"make the decision to go with nuclear power and risk the survival of a nation."*

Looking then at the sprinkling of MPs who had bothered to attend the presentation in person, Kan reminded them that their current refugee problem would pale compared to the kind of nuclear evacuation they could confront in the UK. Where, he asked them, would all those millions of people go?

87 US Senators blithely voted for more spending on nuclear energy

Renouncing nuclear, then, is the ultimate act of patriotism. Love of country (or *"cournty"* as the typo-loving Ted Cruz campaign would say) should mean making decisions that protect it, not letting it turn into a radioactive wasteland.

Which makes it so hard to understand why any US political leader on the Left or Right - but especially those Freedom Fries-loving, jingoistic wall-building, Make-America-Great-Again saber rattlers - would continue to support, promote and secure funds for an industry that could kill tens of thousands of people and exile even more.

The argument that it can't or won't happen in the US was undermined by Chernobyl, then obliterated by Fukushima.

Senator Bernie Sanders, a true independent currently running for president on the Democratic ticket, was on top of that reality early. In a March 2012 Senate hearing on Fukushima he reminded us that, *"with nuclear power, 99.9% safe is not good enough."* Sanders had reason to be alarmed as the then still functioning but now closed Vermont Yankee reactor in his state is the same design as those at Fukushima. Nevertheless, the Republican Party, and a shamefully large swath of Democrats as well, voted lockstep in the Senate on January 28 for the Nuclear Innovation Capabilities Act, an amendment shoe-horned into the massive Senate Energy Policy Modernization Act still under discussion.

With very little fanfare, 87 senators were happy to endorse the squandering of likely billions more taxpayer dollars on yet another nuclear snipe hunt, dreaming of fusion and fast reactors, when solar and wind would do very nicely instead.

So much money, so much risk

As Sanders noted in the 2012 hearing, *"the future of nuclear power will one hundred percent be determined by whether or not the taxpayers of this country continue to provide huge, huge financial support to the nuclear power industry for the indefinite future."*

Ditto the current regime in Japan, led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is intent on restarting the country's still operable reactors (three down 40 to go) including the latest at Takahama which uses plutonium fuel. He is also an ardent exporter of nuclear reactor technology, apparently as eager to destroy other countries as his own.

One willing client is the UK which is looking to build a Japanese Hitachi reactor at its Wylfa site in Wales. Never mind that the country's flagship two-reactor EDF project at Hinkley C has turned into the worst kind of French farce with costs currently estimated at \$36 billion and rising.

As Dr. Paul Dorfman of the Nuclear Consulting Group told the House of Commons audience in January: *"It's deeply difficult to see why one could wish to spend so much money to take so many risks."*

40 years of sit-ins for A-Bomb survivor

February 19, 2016

Hibakusha: A-Bomb survivor holds sit-ins protesting nuclear tests for over 40 years

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160219/p2a/00m/0na/014000c>

Takeshi Yamakawa reflects on the over 40 years he has kept up his sit-in protests against nuclear weapon tests, at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum in Nagasaki, on Jan. 13, 2016. (Mainichi)

NAGASAKI -- Atomic bomb survivor Takeshi Yamakawa was exasperated this year when he read a newspaper report about North Korea's fourth nuclear weapon test.

Yamakawa, 79, is an organizer for a Nagasaki citizens' group that holds protest sit-ins whenever a country conducts a nuclear test. On Jan. 10, the group held its 400th protest sit-in at Peace Park in Nagasaki, in front of the peace statue there.

"I had hoped that 399 times would be enough," says Yamakawa. Around 40 people including high school students and other young people participated in the Jan. 10 sit-in, where a member read aloud their message of protest, saying, "Humanity and nuclear weapons cannot co-exist. This is human knowledge that we have learned firsthand." Many news media outlets covered the anger and disappointment of people in the areas hit by the atomic bombings over the North Korea nuclear tests.

The sit-ins started on Aug. 17, 1974, in response to nuclear tests by the United States, the Soviet Union and France. They were called for by Ayao Imada, an A-bomb survivor whose father, a Buddhist monk, died from the Nagasaki bomb. "Let's show the anger of the bombed areas through action," Imada had urged. The first sit-in had five participants, including Imada and Yamakawa, who was an elementary school teacher. With vests and banners reading "Let's immediately stop the nuclear tests," the protest was held silently in Peace Park.

It was the middle of the Cold War then. Yamakawa says, "As long as the various countries of the world don't abandon their nuclear weapon policies, the nuclear arms race and nuclear tests will continue. The A-bomb survivors, who experienced the terror of the bomb firsthand, felt anger and a sense of crisis." Starting from the sixth sit-in, the location was moved to what is currently the front of the peace statue in the park, a location visited by tourists, in order to make the protests more visible. There was at least one time when the only person at the sit-in was Imada.

"The sit-ins are a battle of patience between sanity and insanity. We mustn't lose," Imada said. Having started with only five participants, the sit-ins have continued for over 40 years now, through rain and snow. They have brought about the formation of citizens' groups around the prefecture that protest nuclear tests, and young people started to join the protests.

In November last year, Imada -- a teacher of peace to Yamakawa -- died at age 86. Yamakawa became the only remaining person at the sit-ins who was there from the beginning.

Imada had said, "If you appeal to society, it will resonate and your circle will expand. Let's do what we can to leave a peaceful world without the worry of nuclear war to the next generation. Have hope." Those words are inherited by Yamakawa and the young generations, and continue to be the hope of Nagasaki 71 years after the A-bomb.

All victims of nukes unite!

February 20, 2016

Hibakusha: Hiroshima 'black rain' victim encouraged by plaintiff in Fukushima class action case
<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160220/p2a/00m/0na/022000c>

At the end of January, just after a spell of cold weather had swept across the Japanese archipelago, Seiji Takato checked a freshly printed newsletter he had been working on at his office in Hiroshima. He appeared satisfied. The newsletter contained a message from Ruiko Muto, the head of a group of plaintiffs seeking criminal prosecution of parties including Tokyo Electric Power Co. over the leak of radioactively contaminated water from the utility's crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant into the ocean. The 75-year-old former high school biology teacher and his acquaintances decided to publish the newsletter to show support for a group of 64 people who had filed a class action lawsuit against the Hiroshima prefectural and municipal governments. **The 64 plaintiffs were demanding that those who were showered with "black rain" (rain mixed with fallout) in the wake of the atomic bombing of**

Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, be recognized as A-bomb sufferers and be given handbooks that would enable them to receive health care benefits.

For the first issue of the newsletter, Takato, a black rain victim himself, included a piece by Muto.

"The case you have brought to the court is a very important lawsuit for Fukushima that deals with health damage caused by exposures to low doses of radiation. ... Let's join hands in a fight to protect all lives from nuclear threats," reads Muto's message.

Takato has paid attention to the government's designation of evacuation areas around the Fukushima plant and the lifting of evacuation orders after the nuclear disaster, and he felt similarities with the handling of black rain, as authorities drew lines between the zones where people would be recognized as hibakusha and other areas. The health damage caused by exposure to radiation cannot be determined with sharp lines like those on a map.

"I always think about Fukushima," Takato says. He asked Muto to write a piece for the newsletter via a mutual acquaintance.

In the course of meeting with Fukushima evacuees who had left their hometowns to come to Hiroshima and in talking with them on multiple occasions over the past five years, Takato sensed a perception among evacuees that evacuation was a bad thing. He was reminded of the resigned look on black rain sufferers' faces when he launched a local victims' association in 2002.

"We are just waiting to die," one of the black rain victims said at the time.

Takato was encouraged by Muto's words calling for cooperation among victims of nuclear weapons and nuclear catastrophes.

Takato met with those who had been hurt by the use of nuclear technology at the World Nuclear Victims Forum in Hiroshima in November last year. The backgrounds of participants varied, from those who had suffered from nuclear tests, to sufferers of nuclear plant accidents and uranium mining.

"(The forum) reinforced my resolve to eliminate all nuclear technology from the Earth," Takato said.

In the A3-size, one-page newsletter, Takato included details of the Hiroshima case and voices from plaintiffs. He is one of the plaintiffs and also acts as the secretariat chief for a black rain victims' association that backs the plaintiffs. Even though he fell ill from overwork after the turn of this year, Takato continued to work on the publication.

The 4,000 copies of the newsletter will be sent out to peace organizations and supporters across Japan.

"I want to call for support from outside Hiroshima as well," Takato says.

Muto's acknowledgment of Takato's activities has given him hope to fight in a long battle to end Japan's history of neglecting victims of nuclear technology.

(This is the final installment of a five-part series)

London: Thousands rally against nuclear weapons

February 27, 2016

Trident rally is Britain's biggest anti-nuclear march in a generation

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/27/cnd-rally-anti-nuclear-demonstration-trident-london>

Mark Townsend

Saturday 27 February 2016 18.11 GMT Last modified on Saturday 27 February 2016 18.47 GMT

Thousands of protesters have assembled in central London for Britain's biggest anti-nuclear weapons rally in a generation.

Campaigners gathered from across the world: some said they had travelled from Australia to protest against the renewal of Trident. Others had come from the west coast of Scotland, where Britain's nuclear deterrent submarines are based.

As the huge column of people began moving from Marble Arch after 1pm, the mood was buoyant and spirited despite the cold.

Naomi Young, 34, from Southampton said: "You can't use nuclear weapons. You would destroy the environment and kill hundreds of thousands of people. Why spend £100bn to buy a weapon unless you want to destroy the earth?"

Many waved placards with phrases including "Books Not Bombs", "Cut War Not Welfare" and "NHS Not Trident".

A common theme among protesters was the cost of renewing Trident during a period of austerity.

Andy Pomphrey, 67, from Hampshire, said: "It's such an excessive amount of money for a weapons system when the NHS and junior doctors, are struggling."

Kai Carrwright, 17, from Exeter said: "We are having to pay to go to university and yet they want to spend £100bn on something that can only lead to the destruction of life on Earth."

The campaigners headed for Trafalgar Square where were addressed by the leaders of the SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Green party. The true draw – cited as an inspiration by many of those assembled – was the leader of the Labour party, Jeremy Corbyn, whose unswerving unilateralist stance has electrified the nuclear deterrent debate in a manner few could have foreseen.

As crowds built from midday close to the assembly point at Marble Arch, it quickly became evident that the event would mark the biggest anti-nuclear demonstration since 1983, when 300,000 gathered in London's Hyde Park to demonstrate against the deployment of Cruise missiles at Greenham Common, Berkshire. Union officials, faith leaders, anti-nuclear activists and anti-war campaigners were evident. Stewards estimated the numbers ran into "many tens of thousands".

Organisers of the march, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, were confident the turnout would send a robust message of growing support against renewing the nuclear weapons system – at an estimated cost of least £41bn – and argued that worries about job losses were a red herring.

Corbyn's decision to address the rally later on Saturday has further exposed a faultline through the party, and he has been criticised by some for highlighting party splits on a key debate.

Entering the stage to rapturous applause, he said that no one should forget the "absolute mass destruction on both sides" that would follow a nuclear attack and reiterated his "total horror of nuclear weapons, should they ever be used by anybody".

Corbyn said he was elected Labour leader on a manifesto in which standing against the renewal of Trident was a key component.

He acknowledged the party's role in the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty and urged: "I want to see a Labour government that would adhere to all the articles of the non-proliferation treaty."

The treaty had worked, given that most countries that did not have nuclear weapons at that time had not subsequently acquired them, Corbyn told the crowd. It was a credit to countries such as Argentina, South Africa and Brazil that both Africa and South America remained free of such weapons, he added.

The US, Russia and the UK signed the treaty, pledging their cooperation in stemming the spread of nuclear technology.

Corbyn, who said he joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament when he was 16, also made reference to those who questioned whether he should be attending the protest: "A lot of people said that maybe it was utterly relevant maybe you shouldn't be there, but I want to be here because of my belief in a nuclear-free future."

He said he chose to address the demonstration because he believed in a "different kind of politics in a different kind of world, a world that emphasises dealing with the crying needs of the poor and homeless in this country. Those that are going short and suffering public spending cuts."

Earlier this week, union activists from the GMB attacked Corbyn over his stance on Trident, warning that tens of thousands of skilled jobs were dependent on parliamentary backing for renewal of the nuclear submarine programme.

He advocated re-investing some of the money allocated for Trident on keeping jobs in the affected areas. Actor Vanessa Redgrave, Rou Reynolds of rock band Enter Shikari, and comedian Francesca Martinez also addressed the rally. Other high-profile speakers include writer and priest Giles Fraser, and the writer Tariq Ali.

The rally received support from a number of cultural figures including bands Young Fathers and Massive Attack. Fashion designer Katharine Hamnett recently unveiled a new Stop Trident T-shirt range while Portishead's Geoff Barrow is currently mixing a single in support of the campaign.

The event also received significant international support with campaigners from Japan, the only country to have suffered an attack by an atomic bomb, urging Britain to work towards disarmament.

Gensuikyo, the Japan Council against A and H Bombs, joined similar organisations from France, Switzerland, Italy, New Zealand and the US in sending messages of support and solidarity to the CND, the organisers of Saturday's demonstration.

The Successor programme to replace the four Vanguard nuclear armed submarines currently carrying Trident missiles is now priced at £31bn, with a further £10bn set aside for unforeseen risks.

A parliamentary vote on renewing Trident is expected later in the year.

March against nukes (weapons and plants)

March 2, 2016

Thousands demand nuclear-free world on 62nd anniversary of U.S. H-bomb test

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201603020045

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

YAIJU, Shizuoka Prefecture--Around 2,000 people demanded the abolition of nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants here on March 1--the 62nd anniversary of an ill-fated U.S. hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific.

In 1954, the hydrogen bomb exploded at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, showering crew members of the tuna fishing boat Daigo Fukuryu Maru with deadly radioactive fallout. It was operating in waters about 160 kilometers from the blast.

Setsuko Shimomoto, the 65-year-old eldest daughter of Tobei Oguro, a former crew member of a fishing boat sailing near the Daigo Fukuryu Maru that day, gave a speech at the "3.1 Bikini Day" rally.

Referring to the nuclear accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in 2011, she said, "When I heard the central government announcing that, 'there will be no immediate effect (on human health),' I thought I heard the same words in the wake of the Bikini incident."

"The Bikini incident is not just 'the past.' I applied to the (Japan Health Insurance Association) in order to convey the horrors of the suffering that radiation has caused."

Her father, Oguro, died of bile duct cancer at the age of 78 in 2002.

Shimomoto, from Kochi, said she and others, including former crew members, applied to the health association Feb. 26, demanding that they be covered by seamen's insurance.

Tony Debrum, the former foreign minister of the Marshall Islands, said he had called on nations with nuclear weapons to abide by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and filed suit against these nations with the International Court of Justice.

Organized by the executive committee of the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs and other groups, the gathering was held at the Cultural Center in Yaizu.

Beforehand, about 1,500 people marched along a 2-kilometer route from JR Yaizu Station to Kotokuin temple in Yaizu to the grave of Aikichi Kuboyama, the chief radio operator on the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, who died at age 40 from radiation exposure soon after the incident.

Do not abandon nuclear victims

March 3, 2016

FIVE YEARS AFTER: 'Don't abandon us,' victims of Fukushima nuclear accident say

<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201603030058>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Miyako Kumamoto longs for the days of sharing fresh home-grown produce with her friends in the clean mountain air of Fukushima Prefecture.

But now, the 73-year-old fears she will be forced to live alone on the streets of Tokyo under government policies concerning evacuees from the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

"It is wrong for the central government to say 'return home' and to lift evacuation orders even though its own declaration of an emergency situation for the nuclear accident remains in place,"

Kumamoto told a protest rally of about 780 people at Tokyo's Hibiya Park on March 2.

Saying the government is ignoring their opinions and safety concerns about radiation levels, the protesters slammed Tokyo's push for evacuees to return to their homes near the stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. They later marched near government offices and in front of the headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the nuclear plant.

The rally was hosted by a national organization called Hidanren, which comprises plaintiffs in lawsuits against the central government and TEPCO, and joined by Fukushima residents who are still living in evacuation nearly five years after the nuclear disaster started in March 2011.

Before the rally, Hidanren gave a government official a letter addressed to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The letter demanded a retraction of policies that "abandon the nuclear victims."

The central government plans to lift evacuation orders around the Fukushima nuclear plant by the end of March 2017, except for “difficult-to-return” zones where annual radiation doses still exceed 50 millisieverts.

Fukushima residents who were not living in evacuation zones but still fled after the nuclear disaster unfolded have been provided free housing by the Fukushima prefectural government. The prefecture has decided to terminate that program for the “voluntary” evacuees in April 2017.

Kenichi Hasegawa, a 62-year-old co-representative of Hidanren, told the demonstrators that government officials showed no intention of changing the policies.

“I felt outrage,” Hasegawa said. “Let’s raise our voices and stand up against them together.”

According to the Fukushima prefectural government, around 165,000 people evacuated their homes due to the nuclear disaster as of May 2012. As of January 2016, 100,000 remained living in evacuation, including around 5,700 in Tokyo.

Kumamoto, whose husband died in 2007, has been living in public housing in Tokyo’s Katsushika Ward since April 2011.

She had moved from Sagami-hara, Kanagawa Prefecture, to Tamura, Fukushima Prefecture, in 2003. For years in Tamura, she and her husband grew fruits and vegetables in a field. She said cooking and eating the food with her friends was more important than anything else.

The area where she lived in Tamura, between 20 and 30 kilometers from the nuclear plant, was designated an emergency evacuation preparation zone after the meltdowns. The designation was lifted in September 2011, and city workers have since decontaminated the area.

But Kumamoto said the radiation has not been lowered to a level that reassures her that she can safely return home.

The Tokyo metropolitan government has asked Kumamoto to reapply for public housing if she wants to continue living there after April 2017.

“If I am not picked in the lottery, I would have to wander around in the streets,” Kumamoto said.

Yukiko Kameya, 71, has lived with her husband in Tokyo’s Minato Ward since fleeing from Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, after the disaster.

Most areas in Futaba are still designated as “difficult-to-return zones,” with annual radiation doses exceeding 50 millisieverts.

Futaba is also a candidate site for interim storage of soil and debris contaminated with radioactive substances from the nuclear accident.

“Since we cannot return there, I want a place to live to be guaranteed,” Kameya said. “I want the land to be returned to the state before the accident.”

After the rally at Hibiya Park, Kameya led a march in front of a ministry office building and TEPCO’s headquarters.

She shouted, “Return my hometown.”

Aki Hashimoto, 60, who traveled from Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, to attend the rally, said a friend in Tokyo once asked, “Are you still making a fuss over the issue?”

Hashimoto said the frustration and disappointment over that comment have not eased.

“I do not want the nuclear accident to be forgotten,” Hashimoto said.

(This article was written by Miki Aoki, Mana Nagano, and Jun Sato.)

For a nuclear-free world

March 2, 2016

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201603020045

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Residents rejoice



Kenichi Ido, left, a lawyer representing the plaintiffs' group, and others meet reporters following the court order to halt the No. 3 and 4 reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant, in the city of Otsu on March 9, 2016. (Mainichi)

March 10, 2016

Residents rejoice over court order to halt Takahama nuke plant reactors

OTSU -- Residents here expressed joy over the March 9 injunction issued by the Otsu District Court to halt the No. 3 and 4 reactors at the Takahama Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture, lauding the judicial branch for "making such a courageous decision."

The ruling came despite the fact that the two reactors were reactivated after passing safety clearances under the new regulatory standards introduced by the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) in the wake of the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster. The provisional injunction marked the first time that reactors in operation have been ordered to be halted.

Shortly past 3:30 p.m., Yoshinori Tsuji, 69, a resident of Nagahama, Shiga Prefecture, who represents a group of plaintiffs in the injunction petition, and others raised a banner reading "Landmark decision!" and "Decision banning operation of reactors, which protects our lives and Lake Biwa!" In response, about 100 people including petitioners and their supporters erupted in cheers in front of the Otsu District Court, with some hugging each other and shedding tears amid chilling rain. "We stopped it," said one of them, while another shouted, "We did it!"

"I feel as if I'm in heaven," said Katsuhiko Aota, 74, who evacuated from the Fukushima Prefecture city of Minamisoma to Otsu following the Fukushima nuclear disaster and is one of the plaintiffs in the injunction petition. His 66-year-old wife, Keiko, was overjoyed as she could celebrate her birthday that day with the epoch-making ruling. "The reactivation of the Takahama plant disregards the pains of people in Fukushima," she said, adding, "It is only natural that the court has made this decision amid the ongoing Fukushima crisis. Today is the best day for me over the past five years (after the disaster)."

The plaintiffs released a statement calling on Kansai Electric Power Co., the operator of the Takahama plant, not to appeal the injunction or request the suspension of the injunction. They also urged the NRA to start reviewing the new regulatory standards and the government to shift its policy toward zero nuclear power.

At a press conference held in Otsu from 5:30 p.m., Tsuji said, "I got goosebumps when I read the sentence (of the ruling), 'The No. 3 and 4 reactors at the Takahama plant must not be operated.' I surmise the presiding judge was aware that the 5th anniversary of the March 11, 2011 disaster was approaching when he handed down the ruling today."

Another plaintiff said, "I was glad the ruling concluded that the government holds responsibility for resident evacuation plans (for nuclear disasters)."

Kenichi Ido, a lawyer representing the petitioners' group, pointed out that the ruling "is different from previous decisions in that it calls on Kansai Electric Power Co. to verify how it reinforced the designs and operations of the nuclear plant and how the utility responded to requirements in light of the Fukushima nuclear disaster."

He continued, "The ruling also raises questions about the new regulatory standards, stating, 'Regulatory standards that also encompass evacuation plans (for nuclear disasters) are called for.' I'd like to express my deep respect for the judge as he may have been under a great deal of pressure before handing down the ruling." Ido himself is known to have delivered a landmark ruling in 2006 that ordered the No. 2 reactor at the Shika nuclear plant in Ishikawa Prefecture be halted when he was serving as a judge at the Kanazawa District Court.

Fukushima disaster evacuees who are living elsewhere in the country were also pleased with the March 9 court decision, as were the plaintiffs of other similar lawsuits filed with courts across the country.

Yoichi Idogawa, 73, an evacuee from the Fukushima Prefecture town of Okuma -- home to the stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant -- to the prefectural city of Aizuwakamatsu, said, "It may be fine if reactors were reactivated after safety measures and evacuation routes are ensured, but that is not the case. The ruling is good in preventing others from experiencing the same distress as we have."

Norio Kanno, mayor of the Fukushima Prefecture village of Iitate, whose residents were forced to evacuate despite the village being located over 30 kilometers away from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, said, "It is absolutely necessary to provide sufficient explanations to residents who are concerned about safety regardless of the distance from nuclear plants. In that sense the ruling acknowledged the voices of residents in Shiga Prefecture even though it doesn't host a nuclear power station."

Edano blasts Govt. for pushing nukes

March 9, 2016

Face of government in Fukushima aftermath blasts Abe push for nuclear power

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/09/national/face-of-government-in-fukushima-aftermath-blasts-abe-push-for-nuclear-power/#.VuEhMOaDmot>

by Andy Sharp and Maiko Takahashi

Bloomberg

In his trademark blue jumpsuit, the bleary-eyed Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano became the government's face of the Fukushima nuclear crisis as he faced the press every few hours. Five years later, he has **stern words for Japan's atomic watchdog, the plant's operator and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's nuclear restart policy.**

Edano, secretary-general of the now-opposition Democratic Party of Japan, refutes claims by the current administration that the Nuclear Regulation Authority is imposing the world's most stringent safety standards in the earthquake-prone nation.

"The government's explanation is mistaken," the 51-year-old said in an interview last week at his Tokyo office. "The regulations have not won international recognition as the world's toughest."

The NRA was set up in 2012 by Edano's party to replace a predecessor criticized for ignoring warnings before the Fukushima disaster and having cozy ties with operators. The NRA judges whether facilities meet safety guidelines for restart, and is viewed by the International Atomic Energy Agency as demonstrating independence and transparency.

The regulatory body regards its regulation as "one of the most stringent standards in the world," and from time to time, has been inaccurately quoted and criticized as if we were saying it was "the most," NRA spokesman Go Kobayashi said in an email.

Edano's comments come just weeks after three former executives of plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. were indicted for professional negligence over the disaster, which prosecutors say led to the death of more than 40 people during the evacuation. The indictments are the first time a court will examine whether the failure to prevent the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl constituted a crime.

Last month, Tepco said that it knew of meltdowns at the Fukushima reactors in the days after the March 11, 2011 disaster — something it refused to acknowledge for about two months after the accident, triggering speculation about a cover-up.

Edano said that on March 14 — three days later — he thought the possibility of a meltdown was very high. "While we amateurs took action based on that hypothesis, Tepco — who are supposed to be the professionals — kept on saying 'things are not yet clear,' " he said. "It was we amateurs who were right." Regarding Tepco's announcement that it was aware of the meltdown, Edano said it was better to be late than "continuing to hide" this information. "It's a problem if Tepco doesn't take responsibility like it should."

Tepco spokesman Yukako Handa said by email that the company will investigate the sequence of events and causes of why it couldn't declare the nuclear core meltdown.

Edano was born in Tochigi Prefecture, which borders Fukushima; his alma mater is the University of Tohoku in Sendai, a coastal city devastated by the tsunami. His role during the crisis was a combination of deputy prime minister and chief of staff, holding an average of five televised briefings a day in the weeks after the magnitude-9.0 earthquake and enormous tsunami hit northeastern Japan.

Getting about two hours sleep a night, he patiently provided details on radiation levels, evacuation orders, power rationing and recovery efforts. He was praised on social media for his work ethic, with some pleading with him to get more sleep.

The Abe administration goal is to have nuclear power make up as much as 22 percent of the nation's energy needs by 2030. A total of about 30 to 33 reactors of Japan's operable 43 reactors will have to be restarted to meet the target, according to Syusaku Nishikawa, a Tokyo-based analyst at Daiwa Securities Co.

Edano said he had deep reservations about the government's restart plan.

"As things stand I strongly question whether evacuation plans can be said to be sufficient," he said. "The government isn't getting involved, the government isn't taking responsibility."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters in Tokyo on Tuesday that Edano's criticism of the plan was "way off the mark." He said that safety was the top priority and there were no problems whatsoever with the evacuation plan.

A Kyodo News survey over the weekend showed that about two-thirds of local government leaders across Japan wanted the government to reduce its reliance on nuclear power, or scrap it completely.

Still, Edano said he felt it was his duty to serve the public in a time of crisis, giving news conferences even when he had no new information to provide. He continues to feel that burden.

"Even though five years have passed, people are still living in temporary housing, and many are living a long way from the hometowns they want to return to," he said. "Even though we are now in opposition, I always feel a heavy responsibility as part of the administration at the time."

Asked whether he had kept any of the jumpsuits, Edano said: "They are government property. I can't even take one as souvenir."

March 9, 2016

Minamisoma mayor (of the first non-nuclear city)

March 9, 2016

Minamisoma mayor sees future for Fukushima 'nonnuclear' city in energy independence

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2016/03/09/voices/minamisoma-mayor-sees-future-fukushima-nonnuclear-city-energy-independence/#.VuEhtOaDmot>

by Sarai Flores

The massive earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011, exacted a huge toll on Minamisoma, leaving hundreds dead or missing and much of the city of 70,000 people destroyed. However, the tragedy for the coastal city was just beginning.

Minamisoma's location 25 km north of Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant put it in the direct path of a sinister invisible danger after three of the plant's tsunami-hit reactors experienced nuclear meltdowns. More than 60,000 of the town's residents evacuated as fears grew over radiation that was released into the air from the crippled nuclear plant. Speaking to an audience five years

later at a news conference in Tokyo, Katsunobu Sakurai, the mayor of Minamisoma, said his city has still not fully recovered from the nuclear disaster.

Amid calls to toughen safety measures in Japan's nuclear industry following the accident, all reactors across the country were subsequently halted. Last year saw the restart of three idled nuclear reactors in Fukui and Kagoshima prefectures after those facilities passed new tougher safety tests instituted in the wake of the disaster. Later this year, Tepco is hoping to reactivate two reactors at its mammoth Kashiwazaki-kariwa plant in Niigata Prefecture, which would be the company's first restarts since the Fukushima meltdowns.

"As a citizen and as a resident of an area affected by the nuclear power plant disaster, I must express great anger at this act," said Sakurai. "When we are looking at how all the affected areas of Japan, including Minamisoma, can rebuild following the disaster, **it is necessary for all of Japan to change its way of thinking, and its way of life too — to move to become a society like Germany, which is no longer reliant on nuclear power.**"

Sakurai briefly became one of the most famous faces of the 3/11 triple disaster after posting an 11-minute video on YouTube on March 24, 2011, begging for supplies and support for his town to prevent its people from starving to death.

Five years on, the city's population has rebounded to 57,000, 80 percent of its pre-3/11 size, but many younger people of working and child-bearing age who fled have not come back. Families are afraid to return because of lingering worries about high radiation levels or fear that compensation from the government will be cut or withdrawn completely, Sakurai said. This is having social as well as economic implications, as the town is short of workers able or willing to work in kindergartens and day care facilities, for example.

"Our hope is for as many people as possible to be able to return to Minamisoma and also join or become involved in the ongoing recovery process," Sakurai explained. "However, we are also faced with the reality that, now that five years have passed since the disaster, particularly those from younger generations who have moved away from the area have built new homes and new lives in their places of evacuation, or in the places they have moved to."

In March of last year, Minamisoma declared itself to be a "nonnuclear city," something Sakurai says his city within the 30 km evacuation zone is the first in Japan to do. Turning to the use of solar and wind power in agricultural projects, in tandem with energy-saving measures, Sakurai is aiming for the city to be completely self-reliant in terms of energy by 2030.

"Within a situation where there is so much suffering around the world, what people around the globe are really hoping for are safe communities and safe societies in which they can live," said Sakurai. "Of course, this is the same for Minamisoma, and so having experienced this disaster, which we take very seriously, I would like to pledge to everybody that the city and I personally need to **work to create an environment which is safe for people to live in,**" said Sakurai.

Your comments and story ideas: community@japantimes.co.jp

Court questions safety standards

March 10, 2016

Court questions credibility of safety standards as it orders suspension of 2 reactors

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160310/p2a/00m/0na/015000c>

The Otsu District Court's latest decision to issue a provisional injunction ordering Kansai Electric Power Co. to suspend operations at two reactors at its Takahama Nuclear Power Plant could affect efforts by utilities to reactivate other nuclear reactors that have been put offline in the wake of the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

It was the first injunction to be issued by a Japanese court for nuclear reactors that were reactivated after clearing what the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) calls the "world's strictest" safety standards adopted after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. As a result of evacuation areas for residents being expanded in the wake of the Fukushima crisis, lawsuits seeking injunctions against operating nuclear reactors have been filed not only in the prefectures hosting atomic facilities but also in their neighboring prefectures, threatening to affect reactivations of reactors at other nuclear plants.

Court decisions over the Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture have flip-flopped in the past. In April 2015, the Fukui District Court issued a provisional injunction ordering Kansai Electric to stop operating the two reactors. But the court decided to lift the injunction after examining the utility's objection in December 2015, paving the way for Kansai Electric to reactive the reactors. On March 9, the Otsu District Court issued a fresh provisional injunction ordering the utility to halt operations of the two reactors.

The key point of the courts' decisions stemmed from the interpretation of the Supreme Court's ruling in 1992 over the Ikata Nuclear Power Plant run by Shikoku Electric Power Co. The ruling has been regarded as a model case for lawsuits filed in recent years over nuclear reactors. It is based on the notion that decisions over the safety of nuclear reactors are virtually left to administrative judgment, and the national government and relevant utilities are responsible for verifying the safety of their reactors.

The first ruling by the Fukui District Court to order Kansai Electric to halt the operations of the Takahama reactors did not touch on whether utilities such as Kansai Electric were held responsible to verify the safety of their reactors, But it pointed out that the "new standards lack rationality."

The two subsequent court decisions, however, were completely opposite to each other over whether power companies are responsible to verify the safety of their reactors. The Fukui District Court's examination panel on objections, that allowed the utility to reactivate the two reactors, stated that "Kansai Electric's responsibility to verify (the safety of the reactors) has sufficiently been fulfilled." The decision paved the way for the reactivation in January this year of the No. 3 reactor at the Takahama plant.

However, while adhering to the Supreme Court's ruling on the Ikata nuclear plant, the Otsu District Court clearly stated, "Kansai Electric has not fully verified (the safety of the reactors) and it is assumed that there are irrational points." It also repeatedly criticized the utility's lack of explanations, saying, "Kansai Electric should present how it has strengthened its safety measures and how it has responded in light of the Fukushima accident."

As for investigations into the causes of the Fukushima disaster, the Otsu District Court stipulated, "The investigations have not moved forward and they are half way through." It went on to criticize the NRA, which compiled the new safety standards, stating, "Investigating the causes of the accident is absolutely necessary to ensure the safety (of nuclear reactors), but if no care is taken over such points, we feel very uneasy (about nuclear reactor safety)." It added, "We must say we are hesitant about reactors immediately becoming a foundation for public peace even if they pass (the new safety standards)."

The Otsu District Court also made reference to the insufficiency of evacuation plans in the event of a nuclear accident. Evacuation plans are not subject to the NRA's safety screening. The central government has no functions to check them, either. The Otsu court emphasized, "There is a need for the government to take the lead in drawing up concrete evacuation plans at an early date."

The latest ruling came after residents of Shiga Prefecture filed a lawsuit seeking a provisional injunction against the operation of the nuclear reactors in the adjoining Fukui Prefecture. The court accepted the plaintiffs' demands, underscoring the trend toward lawsuits being filed in wider areas.

Prior to the Fukushima nuclear disaster, most of the designated evacuation areas were those within an 8- to 10-kilometer radius of nuclear plants. But in response to the Fukushima accident, the central government expanded such evacuation areas to a 30- kilometer radius of a nuclear power plant. Part of Shiga Prefecture falls within a 30-kilometer radius of the Takahama nuclear plant. The plaintiffs argued that if a nuclear accident causes dispersion of radioactive materials, Lake Biwa, which is the source of water for 14 million people in the Kinki region, could be contaminated. If similar lawsuits covering wider areas were to increase, efforts to restart other nuclear reactors could be also hampered.

Antinukes still there

March 11, 2016

Down but not out: Japan's anti-nuclear movement fights to regain momentum

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/03/11/national/not-japans-anti-nuclear-movement-fights-regain-momentum/#.VuK8XuaDmot>

by Mizuho Aoki

Staff Writer

Five years after the horrific nuclear meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant stunned the nation as a result of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, Japan's once highly motivated anti-nuclear movement is struggling to maintain momentum.

The disaster prompted tens of thousands of people who had never participated in demonstrations to take to the streets demanding that the government shut down the nation's nuclear reactors over safety fears. That public anger and energy, however, seems to have lost steam over the past few years, especially after the pro-nuclear Liberal Democratic Party returned to power in December 2012.

The anti-nuclear rallies held every Friday in front of the Prime Minister's Office starting in March 2012 once were able to draw some 200,000 protesters, according to the organizer, Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes. The crowds were comprised of people of all stripes and ages, including students and young mothers with little children.

But these days, to see the face of a newcomer is a rarity, with most people having simply stopped coming. In "Friday rallies" held in February, there were less than 1,000 people each time, according to data provided by the organizers.

On Friday, as the nation marked the fifth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster, anti-nuclear civic groups held rallies nationwide, hoping to reignite public interest and momentum to bring about a tangible change in energy policy.

But at a gathering in Tokyo on Friday to remember Fukushima, which was organized by the anti-nuclear, non-governmental organization Friends of the Earth Japan (FoE), some of the more than 300 participants voiced their concerns over the fading interest in nuclear energy policy.

"I have a sense of crisis about the current state of things," said Chie Otake, 50. "I guess people are tired of speaking up, as nobody (in the government) seems to listen to them," she added.

Eisuke Naramoto, 74, who lives in Kanagawa Prefecture, agreed, saying he understood that it is tiring to participate in anti-nuclear rallies when no visible progress can be seen.

"If you look at media polls, a majority of people are still against restarting Japan's idled nuclear reactors," he said. "But such opinions didn't seem to be reflected in the elections.

"I think it's because, even if many are opposing the use of nuclear energy, their overall interest in energy policy is not that strong."

The activists say most of the participants who now show up at the Friday rallies are hard-core opponents of nuclear power.

"Since the LDP attained its grip on power (in December 2012), our voices do not seem to reach the government," said Kanna Mitsuta, an FoE board member. "I believe people kind of gave up hope (for the government to phase out atomic energy)."

In 2012, amid loud cries from the public to abolish atomic power, the then-DPJ government pledged to eliminate nuclear energy production in the decades after 2030.

The plan, however, was scrapped after the pro-nuclear LDP returned to power. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration is now looking to have nuclear power generation supply 20 to 22 percent of the country's electricity needs by 2030.

"I'm not pessimistic about the situation," Mitsuta of FoE said. "I don't think the movement is dead.

"We should never forget that people are still suffering from the disaster."

People's power?

March 12, 2016

Anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo marks 187th since the 2011 disaster

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201603120026

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Thousands of anti-nuclear activists rallied around the prime minister's office and the Diet building in Tokyo on March 11, the fifth anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami disaster that triggered the nuclear crisis in Fukushima Prefecture.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a citizens group that organized the protest, estimated that 6,000 or so people took part.

Participants raised slogans against the restart of nuclear reactors and the lingering effects of the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant caused by the magnitude-9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

The activists have rallied on Friday nights since the nuclear accident. The latest gathering was the 187th.

"I intend to continue to express my opinions in order to create a society that does not depend on nuclear power generation," said Moeko Mizoi, 20, a sophomore of Tsuda College, whose grandparents live in Fukushima Prefecture.

In a related development, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi gave a speech in an event held in Tokyo on March 11 for the screening of a documentary movie, "Nihon to Genpatsu Yonengo" (Japan and nuclear power generation, four years later).

"I want people to continue their anti-nuclear movement with patience so that the Japanese economy can develop without nuclear power generation," Koizumi said.

"People's voices will change politics," he added.

What confidence?

Wonderful news from Green Action in Japan :two operating reactors shut down under court order !

<http://www.beyondnuclear.org/japan/2016/3/9/wonderful-news-from-green-action-in-japan-two-operating-reactors.html>

Aileen Mioko Smith, Executive Director, Green Action KyodoAs explained in a YouTube video by Green Action Kyodo's Executive Director, Aileen Mioko Smith (photo, left), amidst a celebration parade, Japan's anti-nuclear movement has scored another unprecedented, miraculous victory: the court-ordered shutdown of two reactors, Units 3 and 4, at Takahama nuclear power plant. The court's ruling came on the very eve of the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear catastrophe.

As the video states: *Japanese citizens celebrate the shutting down of an operating nuclear power plant. Citizens living up to 70 kilometers away (approximately 45 miles) sued Kansai Electric, and won! We want to protect Kyoto's cultural heritage from radioactive contamination. We want to protect the largest lake in Japan, Lake Biwa, the water for 14 million people.*

The New York Times' Jonathon Soble has reported on this story.

See more updates about Japan's nuclear situation.

What confidence ? (2)

March 18, 2016

Background: March 18, 2016

Before the Fukushima triple meltdown five years ago, there were 54 nuclear power reactors in Japan, providing 30 percent of Japan's electricity. Following the disastrous earthquake and tsunami of March 11 2011, most of those reactors continued to operate. Over the next year, however, all of them were shut down, one by one, for annual maintenance -- and remained shut down because the governors of the local prefectures responded to the wishes of the citizens by refusing to give the needed permission to restart them. For about three years, therefore, all 54 reactors have been shut down, and Japan has had to make do with additional energy imports and with the cooperation of

businesses to reduce their electrical consumption by 15 percent. There was another 15 percent that was a surplus to electrical needs -- it was considered as a prudent backup electricity supply. In April 2015 the government of Prime Minister Abe announced that it wants nuclear plants restarted so they can play an important role in meeting the country's base-load electrical needs. About 40 reactors in Japan's nuclear fleet are considered fit to restart under new international safety standards laid down after the Fukushima disaster. In recent months, two nuclear plants in Japan, each having two nuclear reactors, have been restarted. Now, however, a judge has ordered the shutdown of both reactors at the latest nuclear plant to be restarted, just two months ago, known as the Takahama NPP. This was in response to a lawsuit launched by citizens in a neighbouring prefecture who argued that they would be seriously affected by an accident at one of these plants. Plans are well-advanced for a massive public rally in Tokyo on March 26 against the restart of any more nuclear reactors in Japan. The findings of a exhaustive report on the causes of the Fukushima disaster, commissioned by the Japanese legislature known as the Diet, were that the nuclear disaster was man-made, caused by collusion between the government, the nuclear industry, and the regulatory body. Public confidence in nuclear power technology has been shattered, and the damage seems irreparable.

Gordon Edwards.

Court Orders One of Japan's Two Operating Nuclear Plants to Shut Down

By JONATHAN SOBLEMARCH 9, 2016

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/10/world/asia/japan-nuclear-plant.html?_r=0

TOKYO — A court in Japan ordered one of only two nuclear power plants operating in the country to shut down on Wednesday, citing insufficient safety measures put in place after meltdowns at a facility in Fukushima five years ago.

The plant, Takahama Nuclear Power Plant, had been back online for only two months after an extended freeze on atomic power in Japan in the aftermath of the March 2011 Fukushima disaster.

Japan's government and its power companies have struggled to get the nuclear industry back on its feet. Despite new safety standards introduced in 2013, much of the public remains wary. Only a handful of the more than 40 operable reactors in the country have met the new rules, and lawsuits have made it difficult to restart them.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government sees a revival of nuclear power as critical to supporting economic growth and slowing an exodus of Japanese manufacturing to lower-cost countries. Electricity prices have risen by 20 percent or more since the Fukushima disaster because of increased imports of fossil fuels, though the recent drop in oil prices has taken some of the pressure off.

The court ruling on Wednesday added a new twist to the legal battles over nuclear power.

Judges have enjoined idled plants from being put back into service, but the judgment against Takahama was the first in which a facility that had successfully been restarted was ordered to shut down.

Takahama's owner, Kansai Electric Power Company, brought one reactor at the facility back online in January and another last month.

The court, which is in Otsu, Shiga Prefecture, said neither restart should have happened. It was responding to a request for an injunction filed by residents, who said the plant's owner had underestimated the size of earthquakes that could strike the plant and had not made adequately detailed plans to evacuate people living nearby in case of an accident.

Government safety regulators say Takahama meets Japan's new safety guidelines, which address such issues. But the court ruled for the plaintiffs, saying there were "points of concern in accident prevention, emergency response plans and the formulation of earthquake models."

Kansai Electric said it would appeal. It has won previous appeals against injunctions issued against its plants, including Takahama. The company overcame a separate lawsuit to bring the plant online in January.

Takahama is in Fukui Prefecture, a stronghold for the atomic power industry that is home to 13 commercial reactors and that has earned the nickname Genpatsu Ginza, or Nuclear Alley. But the latest lawsuit was filed by residents of the neighboring Shiga Prefecture, who said they would be affected by radiation from a serious accident at Takahama.

Radiation releases from the plant in Fukushima affected a wide swath of northeastern Japan. More than 100,000 residents were evacuated, and many are still unable or unwilling to return.

Sounds like intimidation

March 23, 2016

Kansai Electric chief lambasted over 'threats' against plaintiffs

http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201603230074

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Lawyers protested what they described as "threats" from the chief of Kansai Electric Power Co., who suggested that **the company may seek damages from plaintiffs if successful in overturning an injunction to shut down its nuclear reactors.**

Two groups of lawyers sent a letter of protest to Makoto Yagi, Kansai Electric's president, on March 22, saying his remark is tantamount to "threats" against plaintiffs and "absolutely unacceptable."

At a news conference on March 18, Yagi said, "If a higher court overturns the injunction, seeking damages (from the plaintiffs) could be a possible option."

Yagi, who was speaking as chairman of the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan, said that the losses caused by the suspension of reactor operations is estimated to be 10 billion yen (\$89.06 million) a month.

He noted that lodging a claim for damages "could possibly be considered in general terms, but we have not made any decision at the moment."

The remark was referring to the Otsu District Court's injunction on March 9 against the operations of the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at Kansai Electric's Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The case involved 29 plaintiffs from Shiga Prefecture living in areas 30 to 70 kilometers from the plant. Otsu is the prefectural capital.

The protest letter was sent jointly by the attorneys representing the plaintiffs behind the injunction and another group of lawyers called Datsugenpatsu Bengodan Zenkoku Renrakukai (Nationwide liaison group of lawyers seeking a break from nuclear power).

It urged Yagi to retract his remark, saying that it **“can only be understood to have an intention to put a brake on people planning new requests for court injunctions against nuclear reactors across Japan.”**

Yuichi Kaido, a co-leader of the liaison group, said Yagi's remark is totally inappropriate.

“On all accounts, it is a threat to people who requested the court injunction in line with judicial proceedings in hopes that another nuclear accident should not be allowed to occur.”

In response to the letter, Kansai Electric’s public relations office issued a statement.

“The remark explained that in general terms, lodging a claim for damages could be an option only after a lower court ruling is overturned. At present, nothing has been decided about seeking damages,” the statement said. “The remark was not made to intimidate the complainants (behind the injunction) nor to rein in (future legal actions).”

Court rejects residents appeal to shut down Sendai plant

April 6, 2016

Court rejects appeal to halt operations of Sendai reactors

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201604060045.html>

MIYAZAKI--A high court here rejected an appeal by Kyushu residents seeking to shut down the only two nuclear reactors operating in Japan, ruling that it is impossible to secure absolute safety with nuclear energy.

Presiding Judge Tomoichiro Nishikawa of the Miyazaki branch of the Fukuoka High Court said April 6 that current science and technology standards cannot reach a level of safety in which no radioactive materials are emitted regardless of the severity of the accident at a nuclear plant.

“A judgment has to be made based on the standard of what level of danger a society would be willing to live with,” Nishikawa said.

The court did not set any danger level, but it did rule that there was no convincing reason to issue a temporary injunction against the operations of the No. 1 and No. 2 reactors of the Sendai plant run by Kyushu Electric Power Co. in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, in southern Japan.

The plaintiffs argued that the Nuclear Regulation Authority’s new safety standards, established after the disaster unfolded at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in 2011, underestimated possible damage to the plant caused by a powerful earthquake.

Nishikawa dismissed the argument, saying the standards “were at an extremely high level of rationality because it was needed to secure safety.”

Nishikawa, however, did describe as “irrational” the NRA’s assessment of volcanic eruption risk near the Sendai nuclear plant. That assessment was preconditioned on predicting the timing and scale of volcanic activity that would cause extensive damage to a wide area.

But the judge added that there was no basis for believing that such an eruption might occur while the plant was in operation. He concluded that “a political decision” would have to be made about whether to consider the risks related to such eruptions.

The plaintiffs, from the three Kyushu prefectures of Kagoshima, Kumamoto and Miyazaki, are considering appealing the latest ruling to the Supreme Court.

Kyushu Electric Power issued a statement on April 6 that said the ruling acknowledged the company’s past arguments that safety of the plant had been secured.

Setting a standard for an acceptable danger level could untangle the differing court decisions on the operations of nuclear reactors.

In March, for example, the Otsu District Court raised doubts about the NRA’s safety standards and ordered an injunction against two reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture in central Japan.

The lawsuit for an injunction against the Sendai plant was filed with the Kagoshima District Court in May 2014.

The district court rejected the plaintiffs’ request in April 2015. A few months later, in August, the No. 1 reactor at the Sendai plant became the first in Japan to resume operations under the new safety standards. The No. 2 reactor was restarted in October.

A major point of contention in the lawsuit was Kyushu Electric Power’s estimate of the largest possible quake that could hit the Sendai plant.

The plaintiffs argued that the utility’s figure, based on an average of past quakes, was defective because it underestimated the potential of possible future quakes. The residents also said their rights would be violated if a major accident occurred at the Sendai plant.

Kyushu Electric Power countered that its estimate was based on the new safety standards that reflected the latest knowledge about earthquakes.

The company said there was no specific danger of a major accident at the plant because the anti-quake measures implemented were sufficient.

The plaintiffs had also cited problems with the evacuation plans for the Sendai plant that could endanger their human rights.

But Nishikawa pointed to the approval given by the Nuclear Emergency Preparedness Commission to the evacuation plan, which was described as specific and rational because it laid out measures according to distance from the nuclear plant.

(This article was written by Yu Kamata and Morio Choh.)

Court's decision causes disappointment

April 6, 2016

Residents disappointed at high court's decision over Sendai nuke plant

MIYAZAKI -- Residents in areas around the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Kagoshima Prefecture expressed disappointment at a high court's dismissal of their demand that operations at the power station be suspended.

- **【Related】** Local residents decry court's ruling to not halt restart of Sendai nuclear plant

Meanwhile, other residents who expect that the nuclear plant will bring economic benefits to the local community said they were relieved that the court endorsed operations at the No. 1 and 2 reactors of the power station.

The Miyazaki branch of the Fukuoka High Court upheld a Kagoshima District Court decision to dismiss the petition by residents around the plant in the city of Satsumasendai for a provisional injunction ordering that the plant be temporarily stopped. The petitioners had hoped that the appeal court would side with them, just as the Otsu District Court upheld a petition by residents around the Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture a month ago, ordering that the power station be stopped.

The petitioners as well as their supporters were furious when their lawyers came out of the court room and showed off banners saying, "Unjust decision" and "We will never surrender."

"It's extremely regrettable. It's just like a rehash of the Kagoshima District Court decision," said a grim-faced Masami Mori, head of the legal team for the petitioners.

At a subsequent news conference, Mori said, "The decision simply upheld Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s assertions without scrutinizing them. She then read a statement saying, "The court interpreted the law in a wrong way in handing down the decision to dismiss the petition. The court is unaware of the seriousness of the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant."

Yuzuru Arakawa, 82, professor emeritus at Kagoshima University who participated in the petition, pointed out that the court does not take into consideration how to evacuate local residents in case of a nuclear accident. "

"Sufficient roads haven't been constructed in Kagoshima Prefecture. I wonder how many people can evacuate should an accident occur. The court failed to take this into account," he said.

Tomomi Tsukada, 45, a company employee from Aira, Kagoshima Prefecture, said she has not given up hope that operations at the plant will be suspended. "The outcome is regrettable, but we'll also launch a full-scale lawsuit. It's politics that should change the situation (regarding the restart)," she said.

On the other hand, a 43-year-old man who operates a restaurant in Satsumasendai, welcomed the court's decision. "I'm relieved as I'd hoped that the power plant would be reactivated and help revitalize the local community," he said.

Throughout the country, courts have been divided over whether to approve operations at atomic power stations.

Courts have handed down decisions on nine cases in which residents near nuclear plants filed petitions for provisional injunctions or lawsuits seeking suspension of operations at such power stations. In three of the cases, courts ordered that operations at nuclear plants be suspended.

This past March, the Otsu District Court issued a provisional injunction ordering Kansai Electric Power Co. to suspend operations at the No. 3 and 4 reactors at its Takahama nuclear plant. In the ruling, the court said the new regulatory standards should have sufficient leeway to prevent any nuclear accidents.

In the latest decision, however, the Miyazaki branch of the Fukuoka High Court ruled that the new regulatory standards worked out by the NRA are rational. "The standards are not required to guarantee absolute safety in light of social norms."

In 1992, the Supreme Court stated that inspections of nuclear reactors by government nuclear regulators are aimed at completely preventing a nuclear disaster. At the time, it was widely accepted that nuclear accidents would never occur as long as atomic power stations pass safety inspections by the government. However, the myth of the infallible safety of nuclear plants is no longer accepted by the public even though the NRA claims that it has worked out the world's most strict regulatory standards. The national government and the power industry are apparently relieved at the latest decision. Regardless, considering that judiciary authorities are wavering over the safety of nuclear plants, power companies should seriously respond to public concerns about the safety of atomic power stations.

Hiroyuki Kawai & nukes

April 7, 2016

AP Interview: Japan lawyer wants no-nukes after Fukushima

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/8639790e226d46628c113b81c9636058/ap-interview-japan-lawyer-wants-no-nukes-after-fukushima>

By YURI KAGEYAMA and MARI YAMAGUCHI

TOKYO (AP) — Lawyer Hiroyuki Kawai stands out in Japan, a nation dominated by somber dark suits: When not in a courtroom, he often wears colorful shirts and crystal-covered animal pins. He is a Noh dancer, a tenor and, of late, a filmmaker. His ride is a Harley.

Some of it is just for fun, but **much of the flamboyance is meant to draw attention to his cause**: shutting down all nuclear plants in Japan. His **more than two-decade-long legal battle** is gaining momentum after the multiple meltdowns in Fukushima five years ago led to all plants being idled for safety checks.

In March, Kawai helped set up an organization to support Fukushima residents whose children have developed thyroid cancer since the 2011 disaster — 166 among 380,000 people 18 years and under who were tested, including suspected cases. That's up to 50 times higher than on average, according to Toshihide Tsuda, a professor at Okayama University.

The Japanese government denies any link, saying the increase reflects more rigorous screening. Thyroid cancer, rare among children at two or three in a million, soared after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Also last month, Kawai's won a court injunction to stop two nuclear reactors in western Japan that had recently restarted. The district court cited concerns about safety, emergency planning and environmental contamination. One of the reactors was shut down shortly after its restart because of glitches. Both had met stricter standards upgraded after the 2011 disaster.

Kawai's team is pursuing damage compensation for those evacuated from Fukushima, and criminal charges against former executives of Tokyo Electric Power Co., which operates the Fukushima plant. His ultimate goal is to banish nuclear power.

"If another nuclear accident ever happens in Japan, everything will be destroyed — turning upside down our politics, our economy, our education, our culture, our love, our law," Kawai told The Associated Press, sitting at a desk overflowing with files and papers in his Tokyo office.

Born in 1944 in Manchuria, northeastern China, Kawai has built a reputation as a champion of humanitarian causes, helping out Japanese abandoned as children in China after World War II, and

Filipinos of Japanese descent in the Philippines. His compassion is driven partly by his own experience: A baby brother died of starvation during his family's perilous journey back to Japan.

After graduating from prestigious Tokyo University, Kawai represented major corporations as a lawyer during the "bubble era" of the 1980s. In the mid-1990s he began taking on lawsuits against nuclear power. Until 2011, he was fighting a losing battle.

To win over regular people after the Fukushima accident Kawai started making movies, which are sometimes entered as evidence for his court cases. In "Nuclear Japan," he points out how precariously quake- and tsunami-prone Japan is, and how densely populated. He interviews scientists, former Fukushima residents, a fire fighter who could not go back to save lives because of radiation.

"Imagine remembering this film in an evacuation center after the next nuclear disaster," Kawai narrates in the movie.

Since Japan imports almost all its energy, many in government and business view nuclear power as the cheapest option, and the best way to curb pollution and counter global warming.

Kawai's stance angers many in the powerful business community. Hiroshi Sato, a senior adviser at Kobe Steel, lambasted Kawai's position as "emotional" and "unscientific."

"What I'm really worried about is the idea of similar lawsuits being filed one after another. That would lead to uncertainty about a stable electricity supply," he told reporters recently.

Even those who insist nuclear power is safe — including top government regulator Shunichi Tanaka and Gerry Thomas, a professor at the Imperial College of London who advises Japan — say **the choice of whether to keep or abandon nuclear energy should be left to the Japanese people.**

Kawai believes policy shifts, like the turn against nuclear in Germany, begin in the courtroom.

"For 50 years, Japan had a campaign that we need nuclear power, and how it is reliable and safe, and 99 percent of Japanese believed this," he said.

"But we thought we could finally win, and about 300 lawyers came together to start a new fight against nuclear power," he said with a zeal making him appear younger than his 71 years.

Financially independent thanks to his corporate law days, Kawai invested 35 million yen (\$350,000) in his first movie, which turned a profit from screenings and DVD sales. He is now working on his third film.

"I think he is fantastic," said Yurika Ayukawa, a professor of policy at Chiba University of Commerce. She attended at a recent screening where Kawai spoke and surprised the crowd by breaking into a song on litate, one of rural Fukushima's most radiated areas.

Radiation is a sensitive issue in Japan, the only country to suffer atomic bomb attacks, and the **Fukushima thyroid cancer patients and their families mostly have kept silent, fearing a social backlash. They face pressure from the hospital treating their children not to speak to media or to question the official view that the illnesses are unrelated to radiation.**

Two of the patients' families appeared recently with Kawai before reporters, although in a video-call with their faces not shown. They said they felt doubtful, afraid and isolated. Kawai believes they are entitled to compensation, though they have not yet filed a lawsuit.

George Fujita, an attorney who specializes in environmental issues, says Kawai is Japan's top lawyer on nuclear lawsuits.

"It's unusual for judges to watch a whole movie entered as evidence. It's because the people are putting pressure on the courts," he said.

Kawai admits that at times he been tempted to give up.

"I should never walk away. I must fight it out," he said.

His business card is three times the usual size to include his artistic activities and his motto: "If you really mean it, you get most anything done. If you really mean it, everything becomes fun. If you really mean it, someone will come and help."
He swears it sums up his life.

Citizens sue NRA over Takahama restarts

April 14, 2016

Nuclear protesters sue NRA to halt Takahama reactor restarts

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/04/14/national/crime-legal/nuclear-protesters-sue-nra-halt-takahama-reactor-restarts/#.Vw_ED3pdeot

by Eric Johnston

Staff Writer

OSAKA – Plaintiffs seeking to halt the restart of two Kansai Electric Power Co. reactors now more than 40 years old filed a lawsuit in the Nagoya District Court on Thursday to challenge the government-appointed Nuclear Regulation Authority's restart review process, warning that running the units for another two decades would be dangerous.

Kepeco's Takahama No. 1 and 2 reactors in Fukui Prefecture began operation in 1974 and 1975, respectively, and the original plan was to decommission them after 40 years.

However, the government has authorized a one-time, maximum two-decade extension if the old reactors pass new safety tests.

The NRA essentially cleared the two Takahama reactors in February, but will conduct other specialized checks to determine their condition before deciding whether or not to officially grant approval for an extension.

"In a serious accident at the Takahama reactors, there is a danger of radiation damage from the effects of a westerly wind," said lawyer Sakae Kitamura, who is representing the plaintiffs, at Thursday's news conference in Nagoya.

Kepeco is racing against time to finish the safety review and secure approval before the July 7 regulatory deadline. If Kepeco misses the deadline, the utility will be forced to permanently shut both reactors.

The major issues the plaintiffs are contesting include concerns about the condition of the reactors' pressure vessels, and questions about whether the seismic risks for the old reactors have been fully considered.

Suit filed against extended use of aging reactors

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20160414_28/

A group of citizens has filed a lawsuit against extended operation of 2 aging reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant in central Japan.

The 76 people cited safety concerns when filing the suit with the Nagoya District Court on Thursday.

They're demanding that the Nuclear Regulation Authority not approve the extended use of the No.1 and 2 reactors at the plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The reactors began operating in 1974 and 1975. Tougher regulations introduced after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis limit reactors' operational lifespan to 40 years in principle.

The plant's operator, Kansai Electric Power Company, had applied to the regulator to restart the reactors and use them for 20 more years.

The reactors in effect cleared the stricter requirements for restarting in February. The regulator is conducting further screening on aging of related facilities and other matters to decide whether to approve an extension.

The plaintiffs are from 14 prefectures, including Fukui and Aichi. The group's chief lawyer says the suit is the country's first over extended use of a reactor.

The lawyer says the group wants to stop such extension because a serious accident at the plant could affect a wide range of areas, including Aichi Prefecture.

The regulator declined to comment, as officials have not read the suit's documents.

Japanese artists & anti-nuke poetry

May 5, 2016

Yoshinaga, Sakamoto hold anti-nuke poetry event in Canada

By HIDEKI SOEJIMA/ Staff Writer

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201605050034.html>



Sayuri Yoshinaga recites poems on the 1945 atomic bombings and the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster while Ryuichi Sakamoto plays the piano in Vancouver on May 3. (Hikaru Uchida)



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VANCOUVER--With a piano accompaniment by composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, actress Sayuri Yoshinaga recited poems written by survivors of the 1945 atomic bombings and people affected by the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster here on May 3.

About 200 people attended the event, titled "The Second Movement in Canada," held at the University of British Columbia.

Yoshinaga, who hopes to "hand down the plight of victims not in a loud voice but in a soft tone," read Sankichi Toge's "Ningen wo Kaese" (Give Back the People) from "Genbaku Shishu" (Poems of the Atomic Bomb) in Japanese and English, as well as Sadako Kurihara's "Umashimenkana" (We Shall Bring Forth New Life) in English.

Toge and Kurihara both suffered in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and they were highly acclaimed for their poems about the catastrophe.

The veteran actress also read, in Japanese, poems about the Fukushima nuclear disaster written by Ryoichi Wago and Shigeko Sato, both of whom are from Fukushima Prefecture and were affected by the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

One other work read at the May 3 event was "Furitsumu" (Falling down) by celebrated poet Kiyoko Nagase, whose admirers include Empress Michiko. The empress herself has translated "Furitsumu" into English.

It was the second time for Yoshinaga and Sakamoto to hold a poetry reading event overseas. The previous one took place at Oxford University in Britain in 2011.

"I relate to her strong belief that humans and nuclear weapons cannot coexist," Sakamoto said about Yoshinaga in his speech at the gathering. "I hope that people will not have to suffer nuclear weapons or an accident at a nuclear power plant."

Over the past 30 years, Yoshinaga has held poetry readings about the suffering caused by the atomic bombs.

She starred in “Haha to Kuraseba” (Living with My Mother), a 2015 movie directed by Yoji Yamada featuring a mother who lost her young child in the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Sakamoto wrote the music for the movie, which was released in Canada on May 4 for the first time abroad. The event in Vancouver was organized by the University of British Columbia, the Simons Foundation and The Asahi Shimbun.

Koizumi in California in support of US sailors

May 19, 2016

Former Prime Minister Koizumi backs U.S. sailors suing over Fukushima radiation

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/05/18/national/former-prime-minister-koizumi-backs-u-s-sailors-suing-over-fukushima-radiation/#.Vz10GuRdeot>



Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi speaks at a news conference Tuesday in Carlsbad, California. | KYODO

Kyodo

CARLSBAD, CALIFORNIA – Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Tuesday he stands behind a group of former U.S. sailors suing the operator of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, who claim health

problems they now suffer were caused by exposure to radiation after three reactors melted down in the days after a devastating earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

– Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Tuesday he stands behind a group of former U.S. sailors suing the operator of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, who claim health problems they now suffer were caused by exposure to radiation after three reactors melted down in the days after a devastating earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

Koizumi made the remarks at a news conference in Carlsbad, California, with some of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit brought in the United States in 2012 against plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co., which has renamed itself Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc.

The plaintiffs include crew members of the U.S. aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan, which provided humanitarian relief along the tsunami-battered coastline in a mission dubbed Operation Tomodachi. “Those who gave their all to assist Japan are now suffering from serious illness. I can’t overlook them,” Koizumi said.

The former prime minister spent Sunday through Tuesday meeting with roughly 10 of the plaintiffs, asking about the nature of the disaster relief they undertook and about their symptoms.

“I learned that **the number of sick people is still increasing, and their symptoms are worsening,**” he told the news conference.

Koizumi called on those in Japan, both for and against nuclear power, to come together to think of ways to help the ailing U.S. servicemen.

The group of about 400 former U.S. Navy sailors and Marines alleges the utility, known until recently as Tepco, did not provide accurate information about the dangers of radioactive material being emitted from the disaster-struck plant.

This led the U.S. military to judge the area as being safe to operate in, resulting in the radiation exposure, the group claims.

One of the plaintiffs at the news conference, Daniel Hair, said Koizumi’s involvement made him feel for the first time that Japan is paying serious attention to their plight.

According to lawyers for the group, seven of its members have died so far, including some from leukemia.

Koizumi, who served as prime minister between 2001 and 2006, came out in opposition to nuclear power in the wake of the 2011 disaster. He has repeatedly urged the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to halt its efforts to restart dormant reactors across Japan.

Sign Friends of the Earth Japan's petition

Contaminated soil (8,000 becquerel/kg), produced by the Fukushima nuclear disaster

to be used for public works?!

Protect environment for Children and Future

8,000 becquerel/kg

80 times higher than the existing standard (100 bq/kg), this will force radiation exposure on the entire population!!

Petitioning Minister of Environment Tamayo Marukawa

Contaminated soil , produced by the nuclear disaster, to be used for public works !?

FoE Japan

Urgent Petition: “No” to the Policy “To Use Contaminated Soil (Less than 8,000 becquerel/kg) for Public Works”—

Don’t Contaminate the Environment, Don’t Force Radiation Exposure on the Entire Population

On March 30, the Ministry of Environment (MOE) of Japan decided to allow the use of contaminated soil (lower than 8,000 becquerel/kg) for public works nationwide with “proper containment measures.” The committee argues that the additional effective dose for residents will be less than 10 μ Sv/year, but the Nuclear Reactor Regulation Act that specifies 100 becquerel/kg or less as the threshold for reusing concrete and metals from nuclear power plants. MOE’s latest policy increases the threshold eightyfold. Moreover, the Working Group on Safety Evaluation of the Effects of Radiation within the investigative committee met behind closed doors, and its meeting minutes have not been published. In fact, the goal of the committee is to increase an amount of radioactive waste for reuse in order to decrease an amount for final disposal. The committee seems to consider it inevitable to expose the entire Japanese population to radiation to implement the infeasible policy of “decontamination and repatriation” for Fukushima residents.

MOE boasts that “the reconstruction of Fukushima and the Tohoku region not only constitutes a crucial project for the renewal of Japan but also will become an unprecedented source of knowledge and experience to be shared with international society.” But “proper containment measures” is unrealistic. Even strictly managed disposal sites contaminate their surroundings and groundwater; how can public works, which are not as strictly as managed, prevent contaminated soil from spreading radioactivity? Indeed, rainfall, erosion, and disasters can damage public works to trigger a significant release of radioactivity in the environment. Construction work will also expose laborers to radioactivity. If a huge earthquake occurs, roads will be damaged, exposing radioactive waste to the air. This is indeed a “national

project” to force radiation exposure on the entire Japanese population, including children. We cannot, and will not, allow it.

Petition Items

1. Retract the policy to use decontaminated soil, which contains radioactive waste, for public works.
2. Rethink the goal of the policy to “decontaminate and repatriate.”
3. Enlist wider participation from people inside and outside Fukushima Prefecture in deciding on issues related to decontamination and disposal of decontaminated soil.
4. Disclose all information regarding the Working Group on Safety Evaluation of the Effects of Radiation, including the names of members, meeting minutes, and reference materials.

Deadline: June 30, 2016

Send your signature to: Friends of the Earth Japan

Address: 1-21-9 Komone, Itabashi, Tokyo 173-0037 JAPAN Tel: +81-3-6909-5983 Fax: +81-3-6909-5986

Contact::

Friend of the Earth Japan

1-21-9 Komone, Itabashi, Tokyo

173-0037, Japan

Tel:+81-3-6909-5983 Fax:+81-3-6909-5986

<http://www.foejapan.org/en/>

(translated by Hiro Saito)

Koizumi supports US sailors (2)

May 19, 2016

Tearful Koizumi backs U.S. vets suing over 2011 nuclear disaster

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201605190065.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

May 19, 2016 at 19:25 JST

CARLSBAD, California--Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi broke down in tears as he made an emotional plea of support for U.S. Navy sailors beset by health problems they claim resulted from radioactive fallout after the 2011 nuclear disaster.

More than 400 veterans who were part of a mission called Operation Tomodachi to provide humanitarian relief after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami filed a mass lawsuit in California against Tokyo Electric Power Co., operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. They are seeking compensation and an explanation for their health problems.

Koizumi, 74, responded to a request from a group supporting the plaintiffs and flew to the United States to meet with 10 veterans.

At a news conference here on May 17, Koizumi said: "U.S. military personnel who did their utmost in providing relief are now suffering from serious illnesses. We cannot ignore the situation."

Apparently overcome with emotion, Koizumi started crying, but went on and said, "Proponents and opponents of nuclear energy must think together about what can be done."

Koizumi, in power between 2001 and 2006, became a vocal opponent of nuclear energy after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima plant caused by the magnitude-9.0 earthquake and tsunami.

During the news conference, Koizumi also touched upon the significance of the scheduled visit to Hiroshima by U.S. President Barack Obama next week.

"It will be important to see how that is tied into a reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons," Koizumi said. "We should all work toward zero nuclear plants and develop other energy sources."

Some of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit were crew members of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan, which anchored off the Tohoku coast to provide relief along the battered coastline.

Theodore Holcomb, an aviation mechanic on the flattop, was tasked with washing down U.S. helicopters that had operated in areas with high radiation. He was later diagnosed with synovial sarcoma, a rare form of cancer. He died in 2014 at age 35.

The Department of Veterans Affairs later cut off a study into the causal relationship between his exposure to radiation and his illness.

His best friend in the Navy, Manuel Leslie, 41, now is one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit on behalf of Holcomb.

Leslie said he just wants the truth to come out for his friend.

Another crew member, Ron Wright, 26, worked on the deck. After finishing his shift one day, he was forced to remove his clothes after a high radiation reading. Subsequently, he developed a swelling of the testicles and underwent surgery four times after he returned to the United States. However, the pain was so intense that he had to rely on painkillers and sleeping pills.

A military doctor told him there was no relationship between his illness and exposure to radiation.

Wright said he was never given protective clothing or iodine during the mission. He also said he had no knowledge of radiation at the time.

According to the ship's logs and the testimony of former crew members, sailors aboard the Ronald Reagan may well have been exposed to radiation as the carrier passed under a radiation plume that was generated by the Fukushima accident. In addition, the carrier used desalinated seawater for drinking and showers by crew members.

However, in a 2014 report released by the U.S. Defense Department, no link was established between radiation exposure and health problems. The reason cited was that only a low level of radiation exposure occurred.

Many of the plaintiffs have not been compensated for their medical expenses.

Paul Garner, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, said, "I hope the Japanese people will realize there are American 'tomodachi' who have been forgotten."

A spokesperson for Tokyo Electric Power Co. Holdings Inc. said, "We are dealing with the matter through the normal channels."

(This article was written by Masato Tainaka and Ari Hirayama.)

Interview with Koide Hiroaki (1)

“The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster is a Serious Crime”: Interview with Koide Hiroaki 福島核災害は明らかに深刻な犯罪である—小出裕章氏に聞く

Katsuya Hirano and Hirotaka Kasai

The Asia-Pacific Journal

3/11 and Japanese Resilience Five Years Later

March 15, 2016

Volume 14 | Issue 6 | Number 2

<http://apjif.org/2016/06/Hirano.html>

Translation by Robert Stolz

Transcription by Akiko Anson

Introduction

Koide Hiroaki (66) has emerged as an influential voice and a central figure in the anti-nuclear movement since the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi of March 11, 2011. He spent his entire career as a nuclear engineer working towards the abolition of nuclear power plants. His powerful critique of the "nuclear village" and active involvement in anti-nuclear movements "earned him an honorable form of purgatory as a permanent assistant professor at Kyoto University."¹ Koide retired from Kyoto University in the spring of 2015, but continues to write and act as an important voice of conscience for many who share his vision of the future free from nuclear energy and weapons. He has authored 20 books on the subject. Professor Kasai Hirotaka and I visited his office at Kyoto University's Research Reactor Institute in Kumatori, Osaka, on December 26th, 2014 for this interview. We believe that the contents of the interview, which offer new information about the degree of radioactive contamination and invaluable insight into Koide's ethical and political stance as a scientist, remain crucial for our critical reflection on ecological destruction, the violation of human rights, and individual responsibility. Professor Robert Stolz, the translator of this interview and the author of *Bad Water* (Duke University Press, 2015), provides a historical perspective on the interview in a separate article. KH

Interview

The Fukushima Disaster and Government and Corporate Response

Hirano: How does the Fukushima accident compare with the bombing of Hiroshima or Chernobyl in its scale? What are the possible effects of this yet unknown exposure?

Koide: Let's start with the scale of the accident: It was a core meltdown involving the release of various kinds of radioactive material. Radioactive noble gas isotopes were also released, as were iodine, cesium, strontium, and other radioactive material. The noble gas isotopes have a short half-life and so at this stage they are all gone. Iodine, too, is gone. So now four years since the accident the materials that are still a problem are cesium-137, strontium-90, and tritium; really, it's these three.²

Now, as for the scale of the accident, I think it would be best to compare these three radionuclides. Today the main contamination of Japanese soil is the radionuclide cesium-137 [Cs-137 or ¹³⁷Cs]. The ocean is largely contaminated with strontium-90 [Sr-90 or ⁹⁰Sr] and tritium [T or ³H]. Right now the main culprit adding to the exposure of the people in Japan is Cs-137, so I think it's best to use Cs-137 as a standard for measuring the scale of the accident.

But we simply don't know with any precision how much Cs-137 was released. That's because **all the measuring equipment was destroyed at the time of the accident**. How much Cs-137 was released into the air? How much was spilled in the sea? We just don't know.

Still, the Japanese government has reported estimates to the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]. According to those estimated levels, reactors 1, 2, and 3 had been in operation on March 11, 2011, and all three suffered meltdowns. Those three reactors released 1.5×10^{16} Becquerels of Cs-137, which would

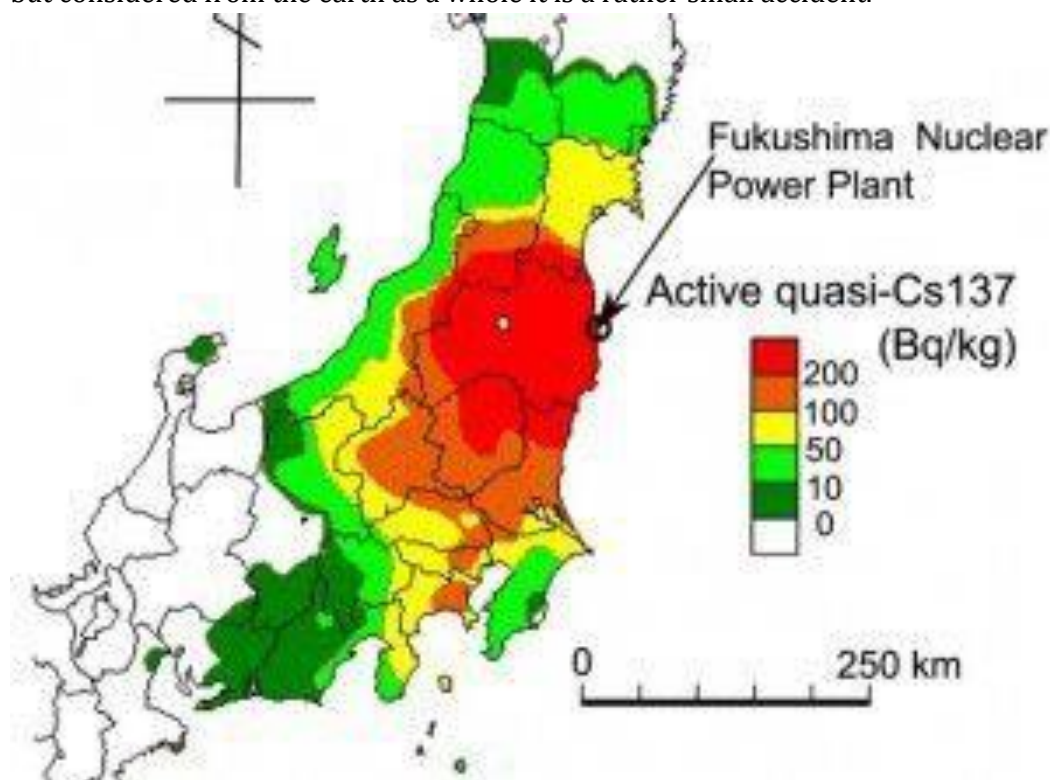
make it a release of 168 times more radioactive material than the Hiroshima bombing. And this is only material released into the atmosphere—at least according to Japanese government estimates.

But I myself think the government's numbers are an underestimate. Various experts and institutes from around the world have offered several of their own estimates. There are those that are lower than the Japanese government's numbers and those that are higher, some two or three times higher than the government's numbers. According to these other estimates I think that the release of Cs-137 into the atmosphere could be around 500 times the Hiroshima bombing.

Now for what has been washed into the sea. That number is likely not much different from the levels released into the atmosphere. Even today we are unable to prevent this release. And so if we combine the amount of Cs-137 released in the air and the ocean together, we get an estimate several hundred times the Hiroshima levels. And some estimates suggest the Fukushima accident could be as much as one-thousand Hiroshimas.

Now to compare this with other accidents: The amount released into the atmosphere from the explosion during the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant was 800 to 1000 times the Hiroshima levels. Put simply, these estimates place Fukushima on par with Chernobyl.

Worse than any of these, however, is atmospheric testing. From the 1950s to the 1960s atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons had already released Cs-137 into the air more than sixty times the numbers released even by the Japanese government for Fukushima. Of course Fukushima is an incredible tragedy, but considered from the earth as a whole it is a rather small accident.



Hirano: I want to ask in more detail about the effect of Cs-137 on the human body and the environment.

Koide: Cesium is an alkaline metal. From the human body's perspective, cesium closely resembles potassium. The body contains enormous amounts of potassium. It is essential for humans. It's everywhere in our bodies. Especially our flesh and muscles are full of potassium. And because of this, when cesium is released into the environment, the body deals with cesium as it does with the alkaline metal potassium, which is to say that it is taken into the body and accumulates there.

Strontium is an earth metal. The body treats it like calcium. As you know calcium is a human body building block that accumulates in our bones. Strontium, too, is taken into and collects in the bones. Just as cesium is taken in and is transported to the flesh and muscle.

Hirano: Comparing the releases from nuclear tests by the US and the USSR during the Cold War period, you said that the Fukushima accident was small. So in what way should we think about Fukushima: is it best to consider it a Japanese problem, or to consider it from a global perspective?

Koide: The amount of products of nuclear fission released during atmospheric testing was enormous, and these particles continue to expose humans to radiation. I'm a bit older than you and I recall in my childhood being told not to let the rain fall on me at the time of the testing. In this way everyone on earth has been exposed (*hibaku*/ 被曝). And because of this testing, historically speaking, cancer rates have slowly risen; I believe this increase in cancer is due to the exposure suffered during the atmospheric testing. Now the radioactive material released from Fukushima has been dispersed across the globe and so once again everyone on earth has been exposed to additional radiation. I think we can expect cancer rates to rise once again.

Atmospheric nuclear testing released all of the radioactive material in the explosions, which entered the stratosphere. Between the stratosphere and the troposphere there is the tropopause, and every year come spring all that material dispersed in the stratosphere breaks through the tropopause and falls to earth. So that material, though initially dispersed in the stratosphere, eventually falls to earth evenly, everywhere. Actually, it might not be accurate to say that it falls evenly on the earth. The majority of the testing was done in the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere, such as Nevada and the Semipalatinsk test site [in Kazakhstan], so that the northern hemisphere—as the site of most of the testing—is heavily contaminated, and within that the temperate region is heavily contaminated. Still, I can say the atmospheric testing overall has caused global contamination.

My focus now is to figure out how to deal with the acute and heavy contamination from Fukushima. I know something needs to be done right there in that specific place. That contamination will disperse and be diffused across the globe. Once dispersed, the amount of radioactive material from Fukushima will be small when compared with the atmospheric testing. Which is not to say it is not harmful. An increase in cancer will be the result. I mention that for humanity as a whole; the atmospheric tests were worse. Now, strontium-90 [Sr-90] has been leaking from Fukushima into the ocean, so it will eventually reach the United States, especially the west coast. This much we are sure of. But to answer your question, the amount of dispersed cesium and strontium released by the atmospheric tests is tens of times greater than the Fukushima levels. Because the west coast of the US is already contaminated from the atmospheric testing, though the dispersed contamination from Fukushima will reach US shores, for people living on the US west coast, the Fukushima accident—and this is perhaps awful to say—contamination from Fukushima is hardly worth considering. Historically a much greater event has already taken place.

Hirano: To put that another way, the current Fukushima accident gives us a chance to reconsider the enormity of the past contamination from US and Soviet atmospheric tests, which has not been openly discussed.

Koide: Yes, that's exactly right. In fact, it is the masses of people who need to realize the impact of the contamination on them. In the case of the Fukushima disaster, for example, they need to be aware that some radioactive material is reaching the North American coast, and the prevailing westerly winds will carry anything released into the atmosphere to the US. Those earlier numbers from the Japanese government indicate that the levels for Cs-137 in the atmosphere are 168 times those of the Hiroshima bombing. I've been told that level is 1.5×10^{16} Becquerels [Bq]. These exponents can be a pain to process, so if we think of it in peta-units—which is 10^{15} —we get essentially 15 petabecquerels [PBq].

That said, while we are not really sure this is the number, we do know that a portion of this material will ride the prevailing winds across the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, closer to the ground, the winds will be east, south, and north, and therefore this other portion will fall on Japan—and we can investigate the actual levels here: how much fell on this town, on this prefecture? Adding these up, it seems to be only 2.4 PBq. Which is to say of the total fifteen PBq, 2.4, or roughly only 16%, fell on Japanese soil. If the totals are higher, still a smaller share of the total contamination will have fallen on Japan compared with the Pacific, with the largest portion falling on the west coast of the United States.

So why don't we hear complaints from the US? Why are there no calls for compensation? Whenever someone asks me this, I simply say that there just aren't any such complaints. Why is this so? Well the levels released by the US during the atmospheric testing were tens of times greater than Fukushima. They are the criminals, so they cannot ask for compensation from Japan. The U.S. government does not want to have to reflect on its own past, and I think they are eager to completely avoid bringing up anything like that conversation. That is why I believe it is so important that those who have been exposed to radioactive contamination realize what atmospheric testing has done to them.

Kasai: I'd like to get back to the moment of the accident in some detail. On March 11, 2011 we had the East Japan Disaster (meaning the earthquake and tsunami off Tohoku). You've already talked about the string of accidents at the nuclear plant. At the moment the accident was taking place, you were following the response by the Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in real time. What did you see in those initial moments?



Koide: It was truly a disastrous response. On the 11th I was in the laboratory in Kyoto as March was my month to work in the radiation-controlled area.³ It was normal workday hours and various tasks kept me busy working within the controlled area. Of course there is no TV or anything like that in the work space. That night there was a meeting so I came out to attend and that's when I saw the images of the Sendai airport being swept away by the tsunami. The report said that there had been a devastating earthquake and tsunami. Then I wondered about the safety of the nuclear plants.

Right then, there really was no more information. We had scheduled a nuclear safety issues seminar for the 18th. I've participated in hundreds of these seminars. Participants from the Ukraine had just arrived on

the 11th. We promised to go out drinking after they arrived and so that night I went out. There was no more TV, and while there was a vague unease among us, that's how we spent the time.

The next day I learned that all power at Fukushima had been lost and I knew things were not going to be simple. Then at noon on the 12th the roof of reactor one was blown off; at that point any expert must have known there had been a reactor meltdown. So I was certain of a core meltdown and because once it has gone this far, there is no going back, it was time to call for anyone who could evacuate to do so. I thought we were at that stage on the 12th.

Yet neither the government nor TEPCO said a single word about a core meltdown; they announced that the incident merited a 3 or 4 on the International Nuclear Event Scale. I remember thinking "You've got to be kidding! There's already been a meltdown. This is at least a level 6 or 7." But neither the government nor TEPCO gave any indication of this and there was no word of it in the media either.

One by one there were explosions at reactors 3, 4, and 2. As an expert in nuclear power, I understood there was absolutely nothing that could be done. I thought people needed to be evacuating, but still the Japanese government didn't make the call. Government officials had set up at an off-site center near a power plant in Fukushima—at first they announced evacuation inside two kilometers, then that expanded to three, five, ten, and finally twenty km. After that nothing was done. The offsite center was supposed to coordinate the emergency response in the event of an accident, but it turned out that every one of the officials fled. They left the employees behind and fled. The Japanese government's response was indescribably cruel.

Kasai: It seems the very words "meltdown" (メルtdown) and "core meltdown" (*roshin yōyū*/炉心熔融) were strictly forbidden.

Koide: Exactly.

Kasai: I was in Japan watching on TV. What shocked me was all the nuclear power experts explaining the incident in the studio. I suppose it was a satellite relay, but when reactor number three exploded on our screens they were giving their analyses of the explosion in real time. There were experts on TV saying that the reactor had a blast valve that was used successfully. Even hearing that, an average viewer might think something was amiss. But having physicists, experts on radiation, on TV saying these things, well, even the average viewer wouldn't buy that explanation. In a broad sense, nuclear experts like yourself played several roles in the media and government.

Koide: Yes, that's clearly true for pronuclear experts. They all tended to tell a story that underestimated the accident. Immediately after the accident public announcements and information were restricted. As a result individual opinions or statements were strictly forbidden and nearly all experts remained silent, so even basic information was not broadcast. Though I'd made statements from the nuclear lab beginning on the 12th, it is likely there were instructions from the Ministry of Science and Education to silence me. The head of the lab convened several meetings where he told each of us not to make any statement, that the lab would toe the official line when dealing with the mass media. I thought this was wrong and said that anyone who was asked a question by the media should answer it, further saying that if I were asked a question, I had a responsibility to answer. Since then I've continued to make statements in the media. Still the large majority of nuclear researchers were not able to do this.

As a result it was the pronuclear researchers who monopolized the interpretations - exactly. So as they went to the TV studios I think each was told: "Today, it's your turn to go to the studio." I think that's how they played their part and handled the media.

Kasai: With respect to controlling information, would you say your experience with the head of the nuclear lab shows how the professional organizations exert pressure on the universities?

Koide: Yes, I would. The head of the lab opened a conference with all the other laboratories—even I went. There he said that any statements to the media should be on message and come only from the information office.

Kasai: So pressure came from academic conferences.

Koide: Yes, there was pressure coming from the academic conference side as well. Take for example something like a conference on nuclear power. From the very start it was never a real discussion; it was a meeting of powerful and vocal spokesmen for the nuclear community or village (*genshiryoku kyōdōtai*/原子力共同体 or *genshiryoku mura*/原子力村), which is to say the group of pronuclear government officials and private companies mainly centered around the LDP and Toshiba, Hitachi, Mitsubishi, and other pronuclear manufacturers of power plants—and of course their supporters in the media. Thus as an organization the conference was predisposed to underestimate the accident and to then promote that underestimation.

Hirano: Immediately after the accident you testified in the Diet presenting data indicating the seriousness of the disaster and demanding that the government terminate the operation of all the power plants.⁴

Koide: I did.

Hirano: After that it seems you weren't again asked to speak publicly, or given the opportunity to offer more detailed thoughts on the situation.

Koide: By "speak publicly" you mean in the Diet or in some other official government setting?

Hirano: Yes, and also in the media.

Koide: With respect to the media, I've never really had any confidence in them. Since the accident, I've been overwhelmingly busy and haven't accepted a single invitation from TV stations.

Hirano: I see. So there were invitations.

Koide: There have been many calls saying, "come down to the studio." But I always tell them that I am too busy for this sort of thing. I'd say, if you come to my office, we could meet. Many did come by, even back then. But as everyone knows, in television you might talk for an hour and none of it makes it on air, or if it does, it's maybe thirty seconds.

Hirano: Right, and only the convenient parts.

Koide: That's it and there's really nothing that can be done about it. There was, however, one outlet for which I was extremely grateful: the daily radio program called Tanemaki Journal (種まきジャーナル).⁵ There I could go on every day and offer my thoughts live. I wish it could have continued, but it was completely and totally smashed. What a world we live.

Kasai: So, on the subject of standards used for assessing the danger posed by radiation for the human body and the environment: What are your thoughts on how the government deals with this issue?

Koide: They are absolutely not dealing with it at all. I think you already know this but in Japan the average person is not supposed to be exposed to more than one milliSievert per year—that's set by law. Why is that the level decided on? Because exposure to radiation is dangerous. If exposure weren't dangerous, if low levels of exposure were safe, there'd be no problem even without that legal limit. But exposure to radiation is dangerous—this is the conclusion of all research. So every nation in the world has set legal limits for exposure.

For people like me who get paid to work with radiation, it's not really possible to observe the 1mSv/yr limit [1mSv/yr]. We're told that in exchange for our salaries, we accept exposure to twenty milliSieverts a year. That's the standard I work under in my job. But the current Japanese government has now stated that if contamination is under 20mSv/yr somewhere, that place is safe to return to—safe to return to even for children. This is way beyond common sense.

Hirano: What is the basis of this claim? Why would the government announce these numbers and forcefully declare these areas safe to return to? What's the basis for the government's numbers?

Koide: The basis for those numbers...for example the government says that organizations like the IAEA or the ICRP [International Commission on Radiological Protection] suggest that in emergencies during which the 1mSv/yr standard cannot be maintained standards should be set between twenty and 100mSv/yr. The government seizes on this and declares that since the IAEA and the ICRP have said this, that 20mSv/yr is therefore a safe level—usually adding that membership in both the IAEA and the ICRP is voluntary anyway. But because these organizations have said this is no reason to break Japanese law. If Japan is a nation governed by the rule of law at all, surely this means that the very people who make the laws should also follow them—that should be obvious. But these guys have declared 20mSv/yr safe even for children. There is absolutely no way I can consent to this.

Hirano: So there is no scientific basis for these levels.

Koide: Well... the danger corresponds to the amount of exposure—you probably know this—so for a country that has declared its intention to maintain the 1mSv/yr standard to then turn around and ask people to endure twenty times that level, there is no scientific basis for that declaration. That's a social decision.

But if you want to inquire as to why, as I've mentioned to you, some 2.4 petaBecquerels of radioactive material have fallen on Japan, that material has been dispersed, contaminating Tohoku, Kanto, and western Japan. So in addition to the law setting the legal limit for exposure at 1mSv/yr, there is another law that states that absolutely nothing may be removed from a radioactive management area in which the levels exceed 40,000 Becquerels per square meter.

So the question becomes how many places or how much area has been contaminated beyond 40,000 Bq/m²? And according to the investigations, that answer is 140,000 km². The entirety of Fukushima prefecture has been contaminated to where all of it must be declared a radioactivity management area. Indeed, while centered on Fukushima, parts of Chiba and Tokyo have also been contaminated. The number of people living in what must be called a radiation-controlled area is in the millions, and could exceed ten million.

For me, if Japan is in fact a nation governed by the rule of law, I believe the government has the responsibility to evacuate these entire communities. Instead of taking a proper action to secure people's livelihood, the government decided to leave them exposed to the real danger of radiation. In my view, Fukushima should be declared uninhabitable and the government and TEPCO should bear a legal responsibility for the people displaced and dispossessed by the nuclear disaster. That's what I think, but if that were to be done, it would likely bankrupt the country. I think that even though it could bankrupt Japan, the government should have carried out the evacuation to set an example of what the government is supposed to do. But obviously those in and around the LDP certainly didn't agree. They've decided to sacrifice people and get by taking on as little burden as possible. So they've made the social decision to force people to endure their exposure. In my view, this is a serious crime committed by Japan's ruling elite.

I would like people to know just how many thousands of people live in this abnormal situation where even nuclear scientists like me are not allowed to enter, not to mention, drink the water. It is strange that this issue has been left out of all debate over the effects of the radioactive exposure. We must be aware that contemporary Japan continues to operate outside the law in abandoning these people to their fate by saying it's an extraordinary situation. Under such circumstances, I think, there are a multitude of symptoms of illnesses in contaminated areas. But if we're talking about any given symptom, it's hard to

say since we just don't have any good epidemiological studies, or even any good data. But there will surely be symptoms, namely cancer and leukemia.

However little exposure to radiation is, it causes cancer and leukemia—this is the conclusion of all current science. These symptoms are said to become visible 5 years after the initial exposure. But because radiation is not the sole cause of cancer or leukemia establishing a direct causal relationship is extremely difficult. For this very reason we need to continue to investigate the state of exposure by conducting rigorous epidemiological studies. But this government wishes instead to hide the damage so I'm afraid no such study is on the horizon. In addition, I have heard about many cases of nose bleeding, severe headaches, and extreme exhaustion. And I am truly concerned about small children and young people living in Fukushima as they are most vulnerable to exposure.

Hirano: So what is your view of the actual damages of radiation exposure on human health?

Koide: On the evening of the Fukushima dai-ichi reactor accident of March 11, 2011, a Radiation Emergency Declaration was announced. The Declaration suspended existing Japanese law concerning exposure to radiation. Though Japanese law sets the limit for exposure for the general population at one milliSievert a year [1mSv/yr], the new permissible level would be 20 mSv/yr. That Emergency Declaration is still in effect. It is common knowledge that even low levels of exposure are dangerous. Including even infants in this newly imposed 20mSv/yr standard will obviously lead to various diseases. Further, because the monitoring equipment was destroyed at the time of the accident we do not have accurate data on the exposure levels of the residents. Numerous cases of thyroid cancer have been found. The prevalence of thyroid cancer is dozens of times that of normal incidence. Pro-nuclear groups say those numbers are the result of the screening process itself, not the effect of radiation exposure. Which is to say that this was the first major screening of that population and so it was natural that many cases of thyroid cancer would be found. Put differently, what they are saying is that they have never conducted a thorough study of radiation exposure and its impact on human health. Science should acknowledge what it already knows and what it does not. If it is true that there is no established scientific data, a properly scientific approach would be to carry out a thorough investigation. To deny the damage to health by exposure to radiation without such an investigation is absolutely at odds with the scientific spirit. Prof. Tsuda at Okayama University has already conducted a detailed study on the outbreak of thyroid cancer, showing an epidemiological-like outbreak. Just as happened at Chernobyl, as time passes it is clear there will be more and more instances of all kinds of illnesses.

Hirano: In your books you've often stated that there is no uncontaminated food. But for most Japanese, such basic knowledge seems limited to food from Fukushima, and nearby parts of Ibaraki, Gumma, Chiba, Miyagi. For food produced outside these areas, do you think it's necessary to have strict testing of food that is sold and consumed? What is to be done? Do you think food from outside these areas should also be subject to strict testing before being sent to market and consumed?

Koide: Right, as we discussed earlier, before the Fukushima accident the entire globe was already contaminated with radiation. This means that Tohoku or Kanto or Kansai food, all of it, has been contaminated with radiation—radiation from atmospheric tests. Beyond this, contamination from the 1986 Chernobyl accident reached Japan on the prevailing westerly winds, meaning that all Japanese food was contaminated. And on top of all this, with the Fukushima disaster, as I mentioned, it is not that a thick layer of contamination has dispersed to every corner of the globe from Fukushima, but that this thick layer of contamination is right now centered on Fukushima.

So if we were to carefully measure the levels of food contamination, we'd more or less find moving out from the highest levels in Fukushima to say western Japan or Kyushu, that the numbers would gradually decline to the lower levels received from the atmospheric tests. Right now the people of Fukushima have

been abandoned in the areas of the highest levels of radiation. And abandoned people have to find a way to live. Farmers produce agricultural goods, dairy farmers produce dairy products, and ranchers produce meat; these people must do so in order to live. They are not the ones to be blamed at all.

As the Japanese state is absolutely unreliable in this matter, these people have no choice but to go on producing food in that place, all the while suffering further exposure. So I don't think we can throw out the food they produce there under those conditions. Inevitably someone has to consume that food—I suggest it be fed to the pronuclear lobby (laughs). We should serve all of the most heavily contaminated food at say the employee cafeteria at TEPCO or in the cafeteria for Diet members in the Diet building. But that isn't nearly enough. We must carefully inspect the food, and once we've determined what foods have what levels of contamination, once that is fully measured and delineated, then those who have the corresponding levels of responsibility should eat it, should be given it.

Now of course strict levels of responsibility cannot really be allotted one by one to individuals that way, so when it comes to this food, I would propose devising a "60 and over" system. The most contaminated foods could only be eaten by those 60 years old and older, and from there also have food for "50 and over," "40 and over," "30 and over" - giving the best food to children. For example, school lunches would get the most uncontaminated food available—there'd still be contamination from the atmospheric tests—but food with only those levels would be given to children and only adults would receive the contaminated food. That would be my proposal.

My proposal would first be a precise measurement, starting from Fukushima and then of course including western Japan and Kyushu, to sort out the levels and then determine the relative burdens. I am aware that this is a controversial proposal, but each one of us, especially those who built postwar Japan, bears responsibility for allowing our society to heavily dependent on nuclear energy without carefully reflecting on the risks and consequences of it. And more importantly, we have the responsibility for protecting children.

Kasai: Recently, that idea has been suggested in Nishio Masamichi's *Radioactive Archipelago* (*Hibaku retto*/『被ばく列島』). You've just stressed that though the first step must be a rigorous measurement, right now that is simply impossible.

Koide: Right, completely impossible.

Kasai: So, that's true of water as well. First I don't think most people know how to measure the levels in water. You've already said how the current minimum standards are worthless, that below a certain threshold it would be displayed as "ND" (Not Detectable). For example, for tap water, up to 20 Becquerels would be posted as "ND," exactly as if there was no radiation detected at all. Yet even with all these doubts on measurement, we must start with it, though it's a dizzyingly long road ahead. But what do you think can be done to change this situation for the better?

Koide: Right now Japan has a standard of 100Bq/kg for general foodstuffs. Before the Fukushima disaster, Japanese foodstuffs were contaminated—by the atmospheric tests—at a level of 0.1Bq/kg. Of course there were some foods with less contamination and some with more. Still, roughly speaking it was 0.1Bq/kg. So when you're talking 100 Bq/kg that's allowing 1,000 times the [pre-Fukushima] levels.

As I said before, any exposure is absolutely dangerous. And the dangers increase corresponding to an increase in levels of exposure; this is the conclusion of all research. 100 Bq/kg is dangerous, 99 is dangerous, as is 90, and 50, and 10—they are all dangerous. 10 Bq/kg is 100 times the pre-Fukushima levels.

So I think it's necessary to precisely measure the levels of contamination. As many people are living in a state of anxiety, groups like consumers' cooperatives and other sorts of organizations are trying to measure the contamination on their own. But the measuring devices that these groups are able to get,

such as the ones called NAI, these devices can only measure levels above 20Bq/kg. While this means that they can measure levels as little as one-fifth of the national thresholds, from my perspective even this lower level is far too high.

And the worst thing that could happen is thinking that any contamination below the detectable limits of these machines, meaning below 20Bq/kg, would be misunderstood as being free of contamination, and then having the Fukushima prefectural government actively using this data as good news: "measurements below the detectable limits of the device must be clean; we can even serve this food in school cafeterias," or PR campaigns announcing "Fukushima produce is safe." Of course it would be totally outrageous and unthinkable and yes I think every effort should be made to serve the least contaminated food in school cafeterias—but the reality is that any food tested below detectable levels is distributed to schools as safe produce.

I think we need to stop this situation, and technically speaking, I think several germanium semiconductor detectors must be deployed instead. But a germanium detector would cost from \$100,000 to \$200,000. And in order to use it, the detector needs to be kept at 150 degree below zero Celsius. So these are not devices that the average citizen is going to be able to use.

So no matter how dedicated any individual citizen may be, there are real limitations when it comes to measuring radiation levels. If you ask me what should be done, for example when faced with Cs-137 or Sr-90, what should be done about these contaminants? Well these contaminants were produced in a nuclear reactor at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi plant and it means that they are unmistakably TEPCO's property. And if their private property is found to have contaminated other areas they have undeniable responsibility for it. So I think this is something that is required of TEPCO. I think it is TEPCO's responsibility to precisely measure which foods have been contaminated, and to what extent, and then to report the results to the public. I think this is something the public should demand. After TEPCO the government also has responsibility—they gave their seal of approval to TEPCO after all. So the public should also demand that the government precisely measure the levels and publish the results.

Because there are limits to what one can do on one's own, I think we need a movement that forces the government and TEPCO to take responsibility for the precise measurement of the contamination.

Hirano: Some have raised doubts over precisely this kind of rigorous measurement citing possible damage caused by rumors or misinformation (*fūhyōhigai*/風評被害), but to me this sort of criticism is tainted with a sort of "national morality" discourse (*kokumin dōtokuron*/国民道徳論).

Koide: Yes, I think so.

Hirano: There seems to be a very strong sense of dividing people into those who are seen as patriotic and those who are seen as un-Japanese (*hikokumin*/非国民).

Koide: For me, I've been making statements on the Fukushima contamination. These statements have been denounced and even made some angry with me. But the contamination is real. For a long time now I've been the kind of person who would rather hear the truth, no matter how awful, than to remain ignorant. I am absolutely not going to hide the truth; no matter how much criticism I have to take I am going to diligently report the truth. Yeah, a lot of people get angry with me. (Laughs).

Kasai: On this point, this year saw the publishing of Kariya Tetsu's manga series *Oi shinbo: Fukushima no shinjitsu* (『美味しんぼ – 福島の実』).⁶ It would seem a kind of political campaign was developed to attack it. What is your take on this?

Koide: The editors sent me a copy and I've read it. It's an awesome manga. In this day and age we just don't have this kind of detailed manga on this problem and I am grateful for it. And more, *Oi shinbo* talks about the nosebleeds [caused by radiation]. The nosebleeds are real. Lots of Fukushima residents are said

to be suffering from nosebleeds. Itokawa, the mayor of Futaba machi, has shown us proof. One of my acquaintances often talks about the nosebleeds.

It was true at Chernobyl, too. But nosebleeds have not been definitively and scientifically linked to exposure to radiation.⁷ Still there is no denying that it is real and happening. So even if current science is unable to explain it, it's for science to ask just what is going on? Science has a duty to explain this, to tell the truth without obfuscation. No matter the reasons, we should be allowed to tell the truth. So for me I don't think there is anything wrong with this part of *Oi shinbo*.

Kasai: I think *Oi shinbo* clearly exposed the politically constructed narratives "damage from rumor or misinformation" and "emotional bonds" (*kizuna*/絆) as fictions, and so for this reason it appears it had to be crushed.

Koide: Exactly. But Kariya, the author of *Oi shinbo*, is not one of the criminals responsible for the Fukushima disaster. Rather the government officials who caused the Fukushima disaster are the criminals. Yet it is these same government bureaucrats who now come out and complain that this manga is out of order. I say, "No, it's you who are out of order. We need to send you to prison right now." But isn't it always the case that a criminal who has committed a crime remains unquestioned and so starts bashing those who are telling the truth? When that happens I think the problem is precisely this word you just used "emotional bonds." Since Fukushima, I have come to hate this word. (Laughs).

Hirano: "Bonds" seems to be the new nationalism, doesn't it?

Koide: Yes, yes it does.

Hirano: You've often said that the Japanese economy and the people's lifestyle would be fine even without a single nuclear power plant. In fact, since the government shut all the nuclear reactors down, the people have experienced no real trouble at all. In addition, considered in light of world standards we still have material riches and a lifestyle of surplus. Given this, what are your thoughts on the call to restart the reactors? For what purpose, what reason do you think the government has?⁸

Koide: First of all, the power companies don't want to go bankrupt. In other words, the heads of the power companies do not want to take personal responsibility. For example, if the reactors are restarted and there's an accident, are the heads of the power companies going to be punished? We already know that they will not be. Even after the Fukushima disaster neither the chairman, nor the CEO, nor anyone below—not a single person—was punished.⁹ It certainly looks as if the reactors are restarted and there's an accident, the heads of the power companies would not be required to take any responsibility. The heads of the power companies, from Kyushu Electric to Kansai Electric, have received this message loud and clear.

What's more, if the nuclear power plants are idled and not allowed to restart, then all the capital they represent becomes a non-performing asset. And of course this is anathema to anyone in management.

Hirano: If we could return to a technical discussion specifically how to decommission a reactor. As have others in your field you've already stated that a full end game cannot be envisioned yet. Still could you talk about what makes this issue so difficult?

Koide: By decommissioning you mean the endpoint of the Fukushima reactors?

Hirano: Yes, what does it mean for Fukushima dai-ichi?

Koide: When we say decommission we basically mean: How do we fully contain the radiation? At least I think that's the main point. Now this is impossible if we don't know the status of the melted core. Though it's been four years since the disaster we simply do not know where the core is or in what state it is. This is a situation that only happens in nuclear accidents. However large a chemical plant explosion may be there'd probably be an initial fire, but usually after several days, perhaps weeks you'd still be able to go on site and investigate. You'd be able to see just how things broke down. And in some situations might

even be able to fix them. But with an accident at a nuclear plant you cannot even go on site four years later—probably not even ten years later.

Hirano: Because the contamination is so severe that no one can come close to it.

Koide: Yes. For humans going there means instant death, so the only way at all is to use robots. But robots are extremely vulnerable to radiation. Consider, robots receive their instructions through series of 1s and 0s, so should the radiation switch a 0 to a 1 you'd end up with completely different instructions.

Essentially robots are useless. Even if you are able to send them in they can never return. Because this has been the case up to now, the only way left in the end might be to use robots that try to avoid exposure or that are built as much as possible to withstand exposure, but that is no simple thing.

So it means until we figure out what to do it would still take many years. Once you understand this fact you can start thinking about what can be done. And at the very least the "road map" devised by the government and TEPCO is the most absolutely optimistic road map that there could be. They are convinced that the melted core fell through the bottom of the pressure vessel and now lie at the bottom of the containment vessel—basically piling up like nuggets of the melted core. There's no way this would be the case. (Laughs).

As the severity of the disaster became clear, water was repeatedly thrown on the reactors. This water would evaporate and dissipate continuously. That was the actual situation. There is no way that the melted core would have stayed as slimy liquid and then piled up like so many little nuggets. It should have been scattered all over the place. This is how the government and TEPCO's roadmap goes: The buns would stay at the bottom of the containment vessel, above which is the reactor pressure vessel—a steel pressure furnace. With the furnace floor broken open, there is a hollow at the bottom through which the melted core must have leaked.

So at some point both the containment vessel and the pressure vessel would be filled with water and they'll be able to see the nuggets of melted core by looking from above down into the water. They say the nuggets (the fallen material), yes, that they sit some thirty to forty meters below the water's surface, that they'll eventually be able to grab and remove them. This is all it takes, according to the government and TEPCO's roadmap. Not a chance. This simply cannot be done.

Hirano: Obviously we can't confirm or really say anything definitive about the situation in the reactors, but what do you think has happened?

Koide: I simply don't know. But as I have mentioned, this whole "nugget" scenario is just not the case, and so I think the materials are scattered all over the place. Though the containment vessel is made of steel, if the melted core has come in contact with that steel, just as it ate through the floor of the pressure vessel, it could possibly have melted through the containment vessel. Depending on how things developed this, too, is a possibility. Unfortunately, I simply do not know.

Hirano: If that is in fact the situation, what steps are necessary?

Koide: First, as we talked about earlier, radiation must be prevented from being released into the environment. As I consider this task as "decommissioning" or the final containment of the accident, I think in order to prevent the release into the environment you must do whatever you can starting from the worst-case scenario.

There are situations in which the containment vessel can suffer a melt-through. I think this likely has already happened. And if it has happened what should be done? Outside the reactor there flows ground water. If the melted core were to come in contact with the ground water, the whole situation would be unmanageable. While this may have already have happened, in order to get any kind of control over the situation, some sort of barrier must be built to prevent the melted core from reaching the ground water. I've been saying this since May 2011—and they have not done a thing.

Kasai: This barrier would be an ice dam, a wall of super-chilled soil.

Koide: That's the most recent idea. But it simply cannot be done successfully. It would cost billions of dollars. And it would fail. And when it did fail they'd say there's nothing to be done but build a concrete wall. No matter how foolish an idea may be, they'll just keep moving from failure to failure.

But really, for the construction companies that's a good thing. I think Kashima would be the ones to build the super-chilled earth wall, for some billions of dollars. And if it doesn't work—they wouldn't have to take responsibility. Next they'd build an impermeable concrete wall. Several huge construction firms (*zenekon*/ゼネコン) would be contracted and would all make billions.

But considered from the perspective of actually ending the disaster, it would be a series of failures.

Personally, I think an underground, impermeable wall needs to be built immediately. They are not going to be able to remove the material. All that can be done is to contain it. Underground the wall needs to be strengthened; above ground the only choice is some sort of sarcophagus like the one they built over Chernobyl. But even this would take dozens of years—I'll probably be dead by then.

Kasai: There are temporary tanks sitting on land for this water, but they are starting to leak. What should be done about this contaminated water? There's not enough space for all of it on land; it cannot be controlled; and every year the volume grows larger.

Koide: The radioactive water has penetrated the coastline around the Fukushima Daiichi. Underground water in the large area of Fukushima has been seriously contaminated. And at some point those contaminated water tanks will fail. I thought we must do everything that we possibly could. Already in March of 2011 there was some 100,000 tons of contaminated water. Even then I proposed moving it but didn't get anywhere with it. Now there's up-to 400,000 tons. In the near—meaning not too distant—future there will be nothing left but to release it into the sea.¹⁰ The water contains plutonium 239 and its release into the Ocean has both local and global impacts. A microgram of plutonium can cause death if inhaled.

Interview with Koide Hiroaki (2)



Kasai: It appears that they are already moving toward that direction a little at a time aren't they.

Koide: The Nuclear Regulatory Committee has been hinting at the possibility of releasing it into the ocean.

Kasai: They have been trying to persuade the fishing cooperatives and others to allow the release.

Koide: Yes, they have.

Kasai: Something that has not been much of a topic of discussion today is decontamination. It has become a rather large industry, in other words, "the exposure industry" (*hibaku sangyō*/被曝産業). Do you think decontamination is really meaningful and effective?

Koide: Yes, I do. And we must do it. But, to say that because we've decontaminated some area that the whole issue is resolved, or that people may safely live in a decontaminated place—I think that is a real problem.

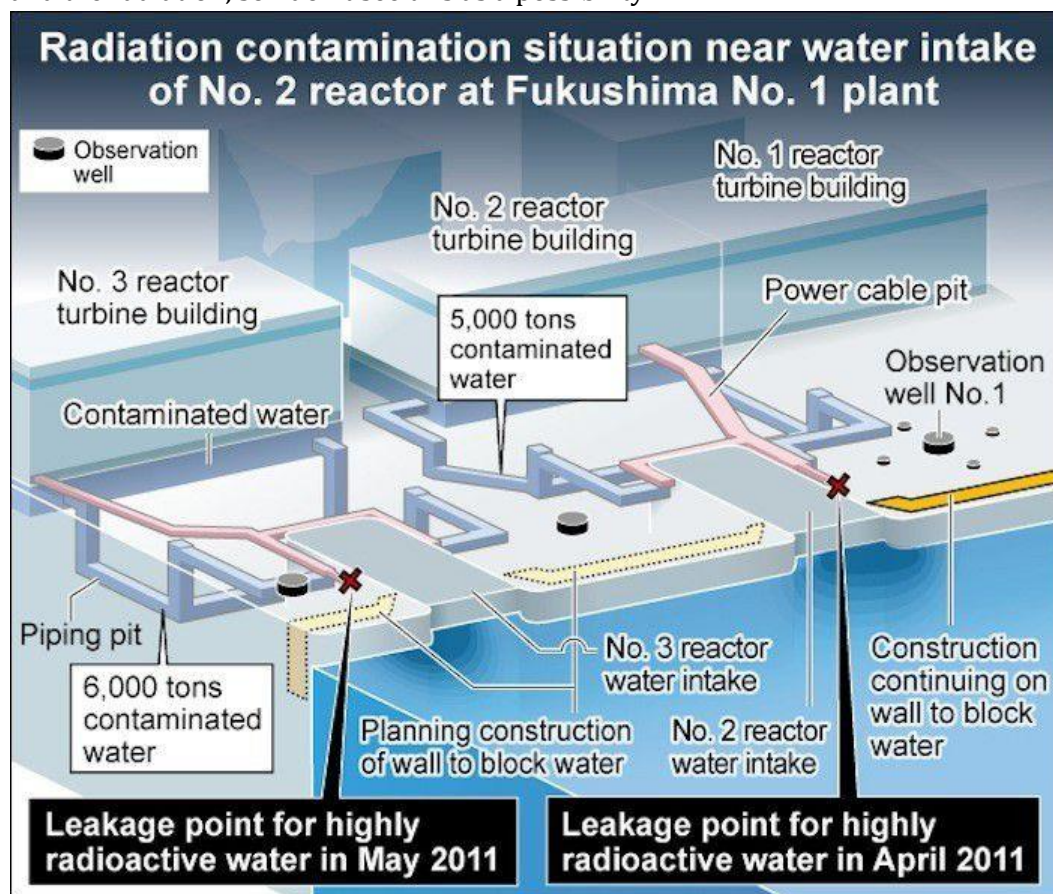
First, fundamentally, people must not be forced to live in contaminated areas that must be decontaminated. First must come complete evacuation. The state must take on the responsibility to allow whole communities to evacuate. Of course, they did not do this.

Briefly, I use the word "decontamination" (*josen*/除染), which is a compound word written with the characters for "remove" and "stain." But this is something that cannot be completed when it comes to radiation, so the original sense of the word "removal of contaminants" is impossible. But as long as people are abandoned in the contaminated areas, I believe all possible actions should be taken to lessen their exposure. It is essential that the contamination be removed as far away as possible, to be transported far from where people live. For this reason I prefer to call it "[toxic] relocation" (*isen*/移染).

But even if this is done, that does not mean that the radiation has been erased. This stuff contaminates everything from mountains to what have you, it gets into the space of people's lives. When that happens it must be removed. But removal merely means moving it around—it does not mean eliminating it. It means another job is waiting to handle the contaminated materials that get moved around.

Right now the authorities say they want various prefectures and other local governments to build a temporary storage and bury the accumulated contamination there.

We talked about this before, but the contaminants themselves were clearly formerly in the reactor at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi plant and are therefore also clearly TEPCO's property. So while it is residents who are doing the hard work of collecting all these contaminants, I think it would be right and just for these contaminants to be returned to TEPCO. Earlier prof. Kasai told us the contaminants were being called "no-one's property" (*mushubutsu*/無主物), but I say in all seriousness, the conclusion of my logic here is to say to TEPCO: "Hey, this is your crap" and return it to them. That way the residents are not forced to accept the stuff, TEPCO is. The best solution is to return all of the material back to the Fukushima Daiichi plant, but that is not possible. Right now that place is a battlefield between poorly paid workers and the radiation, so I don't see this as a possibility.



What I would most like to do is have TEPCO's headquarters buried under all the radiation, but whenever I say this people just laugh. (laughs)

I do have a second proposal. Fifteen kilometers south of Fukushima Daiichi [Fukushima 1] is the Fukushima dai-ni [Fukushima 2] nuclear plant. There is a lot of wide open space there. So first off we would return the Fukushima 1 contamination to TEPCO there. I think there would be enough space, but if there were not, the rest could be taken to TEPCO's Kashiwazaki Kariya nuclear plant. It's the world's largest nuclear plant and so there is a lot of space. I think turning that place into a nuclear waste site is a good idea.

Lately I've been invited to Kashiwazaki¹¹ and talked about it. I think I've become a hated man there. (Laughs). But I think taking full responsibility for various actions is the most important thing. And when it comes to this particular disaster no one has greater responsibility than TEPCO. As I think it important for one to take full responsibility, if Fukushima 2 doesn't work out, then Kashiwazaki Kariya is the only other option.

Hirano: State expenditures for decontamination have supposedly reached one trillion yen.

Koide: It's more than that.

Hirano: This summer I spent some time in Iitate village. Of course at the time the place was crawling with decontamination workers. It was a truly bizarre scene. I had the feeling of running around on a moonscape. Of course there were no residents there—just decontamination workers in strange gear, trucks running all over the place. Looking at that scene, being shown the actual work of decontamination, it seemed to be an excruciatingly slow—even endless—endeavor. I mean they were scrubbing everything with small brushes. I was able to ask the workers a few questions—off the record. Many were people from Hokkaido, Okinawa, and Fukushima who had lost their homes. It was a collection of modern day migrant workers and victims of disaster. They said that they work for just 15,000 yen a day.

I asked them if they thought their work was doing any good. They said they needed the money and honestly had no way of knowing if this sort of minute and delicate work would remove the contamination. Was this a mistake? Is scrubbing everything by hand and then dumping it all in the ground really the only way to decontaminate an area?



Koide: Well I think both that it is and it isn't effective. For example, when they first started the decontamination work, what they did was blasting everything with high-pressure water hoses. That's bad. All that does is get all the contamination moving around. It's really just dispersing it.

Some of my colleagues have said that is a bad method. Be it a roof or a wall, you shouldn't just douse it with water. To really remove the contamination, you would first cover it with something that could prevent the escape of radioactivity then knock down the radiated structure, tear it all off, and then fold it up and collect it all. I think that's probably true. But it takes a long time.

I think there are effective ways of doing it and I think there are ineffective ways. Still it is fundamentally impossible to erase the contamination and so it must be moved. The only thing we should be doing is thinking about the easiest way to relocate it all.

Hirano: That's the meaning of "effective" in this situation isn't it.

Koide: Right. So the current method may be rather small in scale. But for me even small-scale methods are necessary. As long as people are living there everything is necessary.

Of course, there's legitimate criticism over the fact that this is a decontamination business and that the large construction companies are getting rich, but again, for me, as long as there are abandoned people still living there it all must be done.

Hirano: It was really a shock going there and seeing it. To see those workers and, honestly, their lack of conviction for the work. It was a really weird scene. No real enthusiasm, but rather one day after the other, contingent labor. The media has reported that the workers come from a few particular prefectures, but actually being there and talking to them, I could really get a true sense of the structure of economic inequality in Japan, that this sort of work found this kind of person, a person coming from economically precarious and socially marginalized backgrounds. In fact, you come to understand that decontamination work depends on these people.

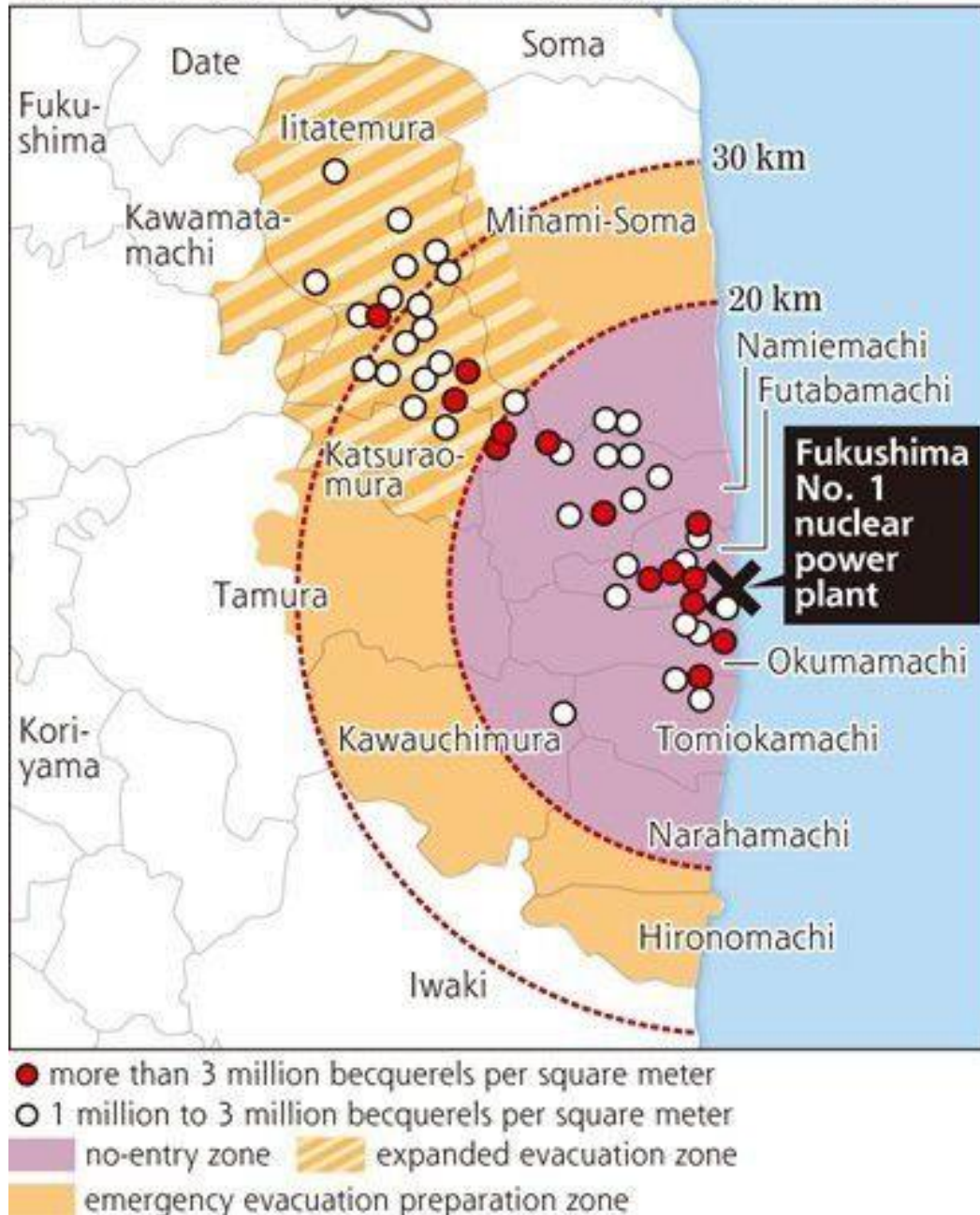
For example, decontamination, or your preferred "relocation," couldn't those jobs be made more equitable—say by requiring TEPCO office workers, especially executives, to do it?

Koide: I've said that.

Hirano: You have? (Laughs).

Kasai: So...about the airborne radiation dosage and the soil contamination, there is a public entity that measures and publishes the airborne levels. But the soil contamination is not measured. I remember reading about Chernobyl that the soil contamination levels are the standard by which one gets the right to evacuation and refuge. But Japan only measures the air. And there are those who doubt the accuracy of the levels recorded. I thought the soil contamination had not been measured yet, but from what you mentioned earlier, we do know the extent of the contamination, don't we?

Soil contaminated with cesium-137



Koide: Yes, we do.

Kasai: The actual levels?

Koide: With respect to soil contamination we more or less know the extent of it. We largely know which prefectures, which towns, and which villages—as well as how badly—have been contaminated. Four years after the disaster it has moved around. Radiation moves through the environment; it has a material existence and also does die out. I'm sure much has changed since immediately following the accident. We have the data necessary to draw a map of the situation immediately following the accident, but we don't have the data necessary to draw a map of the contamination today. That said, we basically know the extent of the soil contamination.

Kasai: Who is it that is making these measurements?

Koide: It is basically the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Some local governments took part as well. Some independent groups, as well as some local governments, took part in taking measurements back then. But for us the number one data source is the US military.

Hirano: I see; how is that?

Koide: They worked at truly amazing speed-and accuracy.

Hirano: Sorry if this next thought seems a bit of a tangent, but right after the accident both the US and Japan were looking at the same data. But their interpretations of it were extremely far apart. The US ordered all of its personnel to evacuate an area 80 km from Fukushima. While Japan's largest evacuation zone was 20 km. Where does this disparity in evacuation zones come from? They are both looking at the same data. How do they arrive at such definitive and divergent judgments?

Koide: Well...and this was true for me, too, any nuclear specialist would have known on March 11th-March 12th at the latest-that there had been a meltdown. And this means, quite simply, that control had been lost. And once control is lost you simply don't know what is going to happen next-or that's what you must think at the time. Disaster preparedness must always imagine the worst-case scenario. If you don't plan for the worst-case scenario it will be too late. What the US did was believe there had been a worst-case scenario-a meltdown-and so moved to take care of its people. That's why they ordered an 80 km evacuation. I think this was the correct strategy. Japan didn't do this. Japan was always thinking of the ideal, the best case scenario. They had to be thinking they could still get control and based their policy on that optimistic assumption. So they only declared a 20 km evacuation zone. I would say that from this conclusion two things may unfold: one is their desire to see this as a best-case scenario and the other is their inability to deal with it.

Hirano: What do you mean by their inability?



Koide: In a word, the Japanese state is incapable of functioning adequately when dealing with a disaster. That's why they evacuated those within 20 km by bus but when it came to the 30 km zone they told those who could easily evacuate to do so and for all others to merely close their doors and windows.

Hirano: So there was no emergency management.

Koide: None. There simply is not a single person in the Japanese government who had thought an accident like this was possible. They all immediately fled the off-site center and so there was absolutely no emergency management—there couldn't be. And because management was now impossible, there were no announcements. Even if they had declared an 80 km evacuation zone there were no emergency shelters. They had made no preparations, so there was nothing to be done.

Hirano: Last summer I interviewed Murakami Tetsuya 12 Just as the accident was happening he reached out to the government. But he got no response. He went to the prefecture. No response from them either. In the end he just used his own judgment. So really there was essentially zero emergency management in place. His thoughts at the time were to get the whole village to emigrate; that really there was nothing to do but to buy land and move to Hokkaido. He said these were his actual plans at the time. In fact, it would seem that the myth of safety has so totally permeated the bureaucracy that there really is no one who thinks about these things—wouldn't you say?

Koide: That's right. Not a single nuclear expert or policy maker ever seriously considered the possibility of an accident like this. I knew accidents were possible, and that when they happened the damage would be enormous; I had been commenting on the possibility, referring to some results of simulations. But still I would have thought the kind of disaster that happened at Fukushima was some kind of impossible nightmare—yet it actually happened. It was like the worse nightmare becoming a reality. And if even I thought this then all those pronuclear people surely never gave it a moment's thought. And so when it actually happened, no one had thought about, let alone built a system to deal with it.

II The Responsibility of the Scientist and the Citizen

Kasai: In your books and lectures you often express strong respect for Tanaka Shōzō.¹³ Can you connect what you've just said to this as well?

Koide: Sure. I first became aware of Shōzō when I was in the student movement during the 1970s This was a time when there was close attention paid to Japan's many pollution incidents, such as at Minamata. Personally I was working on nuclear power, but it was a time when, like it or not, we learned of all the harm that came along with building Japan into a modern nation. What I got from Shōzō was this epiphany that just like the Minamata disease right there before our eyes these sorts of pollution incidents went way back in Japanese history. With Japan's decision to cast off Asia and follow the West after the Meiji Ishin of 1868 came these sorts of incidents, and the question within that was just how should one live? I learned the way Shōzō lived his life. I thought: Wow, it is possible to live that way; I must do it. Unfortunately I am completely unable to do so, but I never stop thinking that Shōzō's was a wonderful way to live a life.

Hirano: Going back to an earlier discussion. You've repeatedly talked about the government's responsibility, scientists' responsibility, and individual responsibility. It would seem that this word "responsibility" is an extremely important keyword for you. You often emphasize it in your writing, too. What I want to ask concerns the issue of scientists' special responsibility, a particular social responsibility. Scientists are often thought of as technicians, but this is not really the case. As a result, I feel you've pursued an intense interrogation of yourself as a scientist. As you've said you are not going to enter politics, could you connect this discussion of scientific responsibility to your earlier discussion of doing all that has fallen to you personally to do? How should we think about these two things?

Koide: I am in science and as such I have to take on the responsibility of a scientist—Just as a politician must take political responsibility. I think I mentioned this to you the last time, but I am an absolute individualist (*tetteiteki na kojishugisha*/徹底的な個人主義者). I don't want to be constrained by anyone. I want to be able to decide my own life for myself. But because I've made this choice by myself I must also take full responsibility for that choice.

It's two sides of the same coin. I don't take orders from anyone. And this means that I alone bear the responsibility. It's really as simple as saying: I'm a scientist and so I have the responsibility of a scientist. Hirano: On this way of thinking about responsibility: "Who is the subject responsible?"—this way of thinking about it seems to be quite absent in contemporary Japan.

Koide: Right. People living in Japan today have not made decisions as individuals. They just "go with the flow;" as long as they follow the "authorities" whom they believe will guarantee the happiness of their individual selves. This seems true of education, too. Go to a slightly better school; get into a slightly better company; grow a bit more rich, a bit more grand. I think everyone is swept up in this current, and it's really senseless.

I think it is extremely important that each and every individual live out their individuality. The absolute worst thing is for everyone to become blindly obedient to the "authorities," yet this is the Japan we find ourselves in today. And so no one takes any responsibility. Living in such a society it is too easy to say, "It can't be helped." Everyone is thus able to blame the society as a whole; "It can't be helped." And so no one takes any individual responsibility.

The most extreme and obvious example was the war. Everyone would say: "It's not my fault; I was deceived. The military were the culprits." Saying this allows people to remain at a distance, indifferent. It is bad news for a nation when its citizens have only this view of responsibility.

Hirano: You've declared, "I am an absolute individualist." Personally I am very interested in that statement. So could you speak a bit more concretely about the meaning of your individualism for how one lives a life? In other words, could you explain just what you mean by this "individualism?"

That is, in Japan being individualistic is more often a way to say egotistical; a sort of disregard of others. One should pursue one's own interests—in English the word is "selfish" — egocentric — pursue your own egotistic advantage. Now this seems completely different from the way you use the term. Could you speak directly to this difference?

Koide: I think you've just done so.

Hirano: Did I? (Laughs). So that's it then, just as I said? Still it's clearly not selfishness.

Koide: No, I don't think it's about interests.

Hirano: It's about values isn't it?

Koide: Yes, it's about personal values. You and I are different people. I am different again from Mr. Kasai. Why? Well our genetic information is different. I received a bundle of information from my parents. You and Mr. Kasai, too, are influenced by your genetic information. Every one of the over one hundred million Japanese is a unique human being; and every one of the over 7.3 billion people on earth are unique individuals.

History may keep moving on, and there is a big, wide world here on this planet earth. That said, right now, at this moment, and right now, in this place, I exist as an irreplaceable being. It is nothing but an absolute truth. You normally live in Los Angeles, but right now at this moment you are a person who is here. Mr. Kasai has come down from Tokyo. While acknowledging all the implications of being within the flow of history, we are all right here, right now.

In other words, every single individual human being has a different way of living a life; they are each unique. They have each lived a life that absolutely no one else could have lived. It is a real loss if they don't live up to their full potential. Those are my thoughts.

So for my own unique self, and so for your own unique self, and Mr. Kasai's own unique self, none of us should be compelled by someone else to do something (*meirei o sarete*/命令されて). If we don't live our lives according to the will coming from deep within ourselves, that's a real loss; we must all live with our values coming from within ourselves.

I am going to retire next March, but though I am the lowest ranked employee here— above me are assistant professors and professors — because of the peculiar arrangements of working where I do, I am not compelled to take orders from anyone. I am the lowest ranked so of course there is also no one below me to order around. So I am in a position where I never take nor give orders. For me this is the ideal position to be in.

And so I can live out my own life according to my own values; I'm allowed to live a life that suits me. Now I found myself in this position largely by accident, and then chose to continue to live my life this way. Related to this, I am a human being and so will make mistakes, but these mistakes will be things that I have chosen, things that I have personally done so there is nothing to do but to take responsibility for them. This is what I mean when I say that responsibility is an extremely important word.

Hirano: Well, you've exhaustively criticized this competitive society. You've said that this competitive society has ruined Japan and destroyed life based on what you call responsibility.

Koide: Yes. Everyone is running towards the exact same goal. It's ludicrous. You want to go that way; I want to go this way. I think this would be the ideal society. Full mutual recognition is a good thing.

Hirano: Does your view come from your personal experience? In your books you state that you were a really conscientious student when you were younger (laughs).

Koide: (laughs) Well, yes.

Hirano: You studied extremely hard. Did everything extremely hard. You continued this in your nuclear research in college believing that a new energy source was cheap and good for everyone. You must have thought this was a great thing.

Koide: That's right.

Hirano: But you eventually noticed that it was all wrong. So on this, from deep in your own experience, it's an individual history, an individual experience, in one sense it's connected to your current individualism, to how you live your life focused on the important things to you.

Koide: I think that's right. So, well, when I was young, in my late teens, I was consumed by the dream of nuclear power. I devoted my life to it. That was all a mistake—it did not take me too long to realize that.

Hirano: When did it happen? In graduate school?

Koide: My third year in university.

Hirano: Third year—so as an undergraduate.

Koide: Yes, I came to this realization in the latter half of my undergraduate studies. It was foolish and I curse myself for it, but I didn't quit. To this day I've lived my life as someone who made that wrong choice, and there is nothing to do but make amends for that choice.

At a minimum I wanted to get rid of nuclear power before there was a bad accident. I guess I've lived with this wish for over forty years—but that wish stayed out of reach. And here we have had the accident so my life has been for nothing. You could say that thing I wanted most to do has been denied. Really, what have I lived for? I think about that from time to time.

As this was my choice I have to accept it. So while the meaning of my life may have been lost, still I was able to live my own life as I pleased, without submitting to the orders of others and without ordering others around—for this I am grateful. My hopes were never realized. History is full of that kind of thing. Likely very few people see their hopes fulfilled. And while in my case they were rejected, I was able to live the life I wanted and that is a life to be grateful for.

Hirano: In a way, it's just how Tanaka Shōzō lived his life isn't it?

Koide: Yes it is. That is what I like about Shōzō.

Hirano: On that point. His life, too, was a defeat.

Koide: Complete and total defeat.

Hirano: Still, he used all sorts of means, and followed all the way through on his beliefs.

Hirano: So getting back to Fukushima, it seems when it comes to the life choices of the so-called Japanese elites, they seem caught in a system in which they will succeed and become famous by crushing their individuality and subsuming it under some organization in order to get ahead in a society and achieve fame and status. And the education system seems to be promoting this lifestyle where these sorts of people are created through intense competition. I think the very end result of this social and educational system was revealed, and it exploded in an explicit and ugly manner through various problems the Fukushima disaster has posed.

Koide: Yes, I think so. You said it.

Hirano: I see. In one sense it would have been possible even for these Japanese elites to make their personal responsibility clear and take appropriate actions only if they had lived a life based on individualism as you suggested.

Koide: Yes I think such a possibility exists, but unfortunately in Japan today that possibility has been completely crushed. It was abundantly clear from the Fukushima disaster that no one in this country is going to take responsibility.

Hirano: You've already talked about how TEPCO and the government made huge mistakes in dealing with the problem immediately after the accident. What do you see as the definitive mistake that led to this disaster?

Koide: There's a ton of them. Any specialist would have known right away there had been a meltdown, and that everyone needed to be evacuated immediately. And evacuating to 20 km away is totally inadequate. Iitate village some 40-50 km away received an enormous amount of contamination and was neglected for over a month.

Soma residents evacuated to Iitate, this kind of stupidity cannot stand, the government's criminal mistakes.



“The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster is a Serious Crime”: Interview with Koide Hiroaki
福島核災害は明らかに深刻な犯罪である—小出裕章氏に聞く

<http://apjff.org/2016/06/Hirano.html>

Translation by Robert Stolz

Transcription by Akiko Anson

Introduction

Koide Hiroaki (66) has emerged as an influential voice and a central figure in the anti-nuclear movement since the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi of March 11, 2011. He spent his entire career as a nuclear engineer working towards the abolition of nuclear power plants. His powerful critique of the "nuclear village" and active involvement in anti-nuclear movements "earned him an honorable form of purgatory as a permanent assistant professor at Kyoto University."¹ Koide retired from Kyoto University in the spring of 2015, but continues to write and act as an important voice of conscience for many who share his vision of the future free from nuclear energy and weapons. He has authored 20 books on the subject. Professor Kasai Hirotaka and I visited his office at Kyoto University's Research Reactor Institute in Kumatori, Osaka, on December 26th, 2014 for this interview. We believe that the contents of the interview, which offer new information about the degree of radioactive contamination and invaluable insight into Koide's ethical and political stance as a scientist, remain crucial for our critical reflection on ecological destruction, the violation of human rights, and individual responsibility. Professor Robert Stolz, the translator of this interview and the author of *Bad Water* (Duke University Press, 2015), provides a historical perspective on the interview in a separate article. KH

Interview

The Fukushima Disaster and Government and Corporate Response

Hirano: How does the Fukushima accident compare with the bombing of Hiroshima or Chernobyl in its scale? What are the possible effects of this yet unknown exposure?

Koide: Let's start with the scale of the accident: It was a core meltdown involving the release of various kinds of radioactive material. Radioactive noble gas isotopes were also released, as were iodine, cesium, strontium, and other radioactive material. The noble gas isotopes have a short half-life and so at this stage they are all gone. Iodine, too, is gone. So now four years since the accident the materials that are still a problem are cesium-137, strontium-90, and tritium; really, it's these three.²

Now, as for the scale of the accident, I think it would be best to compare these three radionuclides. Today the main contamination of Japanese soil is the radionuclide cesium-137 [Cs-137 or ¹³⁷Cs]. The ocean is largely contaminated with strontium-90 [Sr-90 or ⁹⁰Sr] and tritium [T or ³H]. Right now the main culprit adding to the exposure of the people in Japan is Cs-137, so I think it's best to use Cs-137 as a standard for measuring the scale of the accident.

But we simply don't know with any precision how much Cs-137 was released. That's because **all the measuring equipment was destroyed at the time of the accident.** How much Cs-137 was released into the air? How much was spilled in the sea? We just don't know.

Still, the Japanese government has reported estimates to the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]. According to those estimated levels, reactors 1, 2, and 3 had been in operation on March 11, 2011, and all three suffered meltdowns. Those three reactors released 1.5×10^{16} Becquerels of Cs-137, which would make it a release of 168 times more radioactive material than the Hiroshima bombing. And this is only material released into the atmosphere—at least according to Japanese government estimates.

But I myself think the government's numbers are an underestimate. Various experts and institutes from around the world have offered several of their own estimates. There are those that are lower than the Japanese government's numbers and those that are higher, some two or three times higher than the government's numbers. According to these other estimates I think that the release of Cs-137 into the atmosphere could be around 500 times the Hiroshima bombing.

Now for what has been washed into the sea. That number is likely not much different from the levels released into the atmosphere. Even today we are unable to prevent this release. And so if we combine the amount of Cs-137 released in the air and the ocean together, we get an estimate several hundred times the Hiroshima levels. And some estimates suggest the Fukushima accident could be as much as one-thousand Hiroshimas.

Now to compare this with other accidents: The amount released into the atmosphere from the explosion during the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant was 800 to 1000 times the Hiroshima levels. Put simply, these estimates place Fukushima on par with Chernobyl.

Worse than any of these, however, is atmospheric testing. From the 1950s to the 1960s atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons had already released Cs-137 into the air more than sixty times the numbers released even by the Japanese government for Fukushima. Of course Fukushima is an incredible tragedy, but considered from the earth as a whole it is a rather small accident.

Hirano: I want to ask in more detail about the effect of Cs-137 on the human body and the environment.

Koide: Cesium is an alkaline metal. From the human body's perspective, cesium closely resembles potassium. The body contains enormous amounts of potassium. It is essential for humans. It's everywhere in our bodies. Especially our flesh and muscles are full of potassium. And because of this, when cesium is released into the environment, the body deals with cesium as it does with the alkaline metal potassium, which is to say that it is taken into the body and accumulates there.

Strontium is an earth metal. The body treats it like calcium. As you know calcium is a human body building block that accumulates in our bones. Strontium, too, is taken into and collects in the bones. Just as cesium is taken in and is transported to the flesh and muscle.

Hirano: Comparing the releases from nuclear tests by the US and the USSR during the Cold War period, you said that the Fukushima accident was small. So in what way should we think about Fukushima: is it best to consider it a Japanese problem, or to consider it

from a global perspective?

Koide: The amount of products of nuclear fission released during atmospheric testing was enormous, and these particles continue to expose humans to radiation. I'm a bit older than you and I recall in my childhood being told not to let the rain fall on me at the time of the testing. In this way everyone on earth has been exposed (*hibaku*/ 被曝). And because of this testing, historically speaking, cancer rates have slowly risen; I believe this increase in cancer is due to the exposure suffered during the atmospheric testing. Now the radioactive material released from Fukushima has been dispersed across the globe and so once again everyone on earth has been exposed to additional radiation. I think we can expect cancer rates to rise once again.

Atmospheric nuclear testing released all of the radioactive material in the explosions, which entered the stratosphere. Between the stratosphere and the troposphere there is the tropopause, and every year come spring all that material dispersed in the stratosphere breaks through the tropopause and falls to earth. So that material, though initially dispersed in the stratosphere, eventually falls to earth evenly, everywhere. Actually, it might not be accurate to say that it falls evenly on the earth. The majority of the testing was done in the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere, such as Nevada and the Semipalatinsk test site [in Kazakhstan], so that the northern hemisphere—as the site of most of the testing—is heavily contaminated, and within that the temperate region is heavily contaminated. Still, I can say the atmospheric testing overall has caused global contamination.

My focus now is to figure out how to deal with the acute and heavy contamination from Fukushima. I know something needs to be done right there in that specific place. That contamination will disperse and be diffused across the globe. Once dispersed, the amount of radioactive material from Fukushima will be small when compared with the atmospheric testing. Which is not to say it is not harmful. An increase in cancer will be the result. I mention that for humanity as a whole; the atmospheric tests were worse.

Now, strontium-90 [Sr-90] has been leaking from Fukushima into the ocean, so it will eventually reach the United States, especially the west coast. This much we are sure of. But to answer your question, the amount of dispersed cesium and strontium released by the atmospheric tests is tens of times greater than the Fukushima levels. Because the west coast of the US is already contaminated from the atmospheric testing, though the dispersed contamination from Fukushima will reach US shores, for people living on the US west coast, the Fukushima accident—and this is perhaps awful to say—contamination from Fukushima is hardly worth considering. Historically a much greater event has already taken place.

Hirano: To put that another way, the current Fukushima accident gives us a chance to reconsider the enormity of the past contamination from US and Soviet atmospheric tests, which has not been openly discussed.

Koide: Yes, that's exactly right. In fact, it is the masses of people who need to realize the impact of the contamination on them. In the case of the Fukushima disaster, for example, they need to be aware that some radioactive material is reaching the North American coast, and the prevailing westerly winds will carry anything released into the atmosphere to the US. Those earlier numbers from the Japanese government indicate that the levels for Cs-137 in the atmosphere are 168 times those of the Hiroshima bombing. I've been

told that level is 1.5×10^{16} Becquerels [Bq]. These exponents can be a pain to process, so if we think of it in peta-units—which is 10^{15} —we get essentially 15 petabecquerels [PBq]. That said, while we are not really sure this is the number, we do know that a portion of this material will ride the prevailing winds across the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, closer to the ground, the winds will be east, south, and north, and therefore this other portion will fall on Japan—and we can investigate the actual levels here: how much fell on this town, on this prefecture? Adding these up, it seems to be only 2.4 PBq. Which is to say of the total fifteen PBq, 2.4, or roughly only 16%, fell on Japanese soil. If the totals are higher, still a smaller share of the total contamination will have fallen on Japan compared with the Pacific, with the largest portion falling on the west coast of the United States. So why don't we hear complaints from the US? Why are there no calls for compensation? Whenever someone asks me this, I simply say that there just aren't any such complaints. Why is this so? Well the levels released by the US during the atmospheric testing were tens of times greater than Fukushima. They are the criminals, so they cannot ask for compensation from Japan. The U.S. government does not want to have to reflect on its own past, and I think they are eager to completely avoid bringing up anything like that conversation. That is why I believe it is so important that those who have been exposed to radioactive contamination realize what atmospheric testing has done to them.

Kasai: I'd like to get back to the moment of the accident in some detail. On March 11, 2011 we had the East Japan Disaster (meaning the earthquake and tsunami off Tohoku). You've already talked about the string of accidents at the nuclear plant. At the moment the accident was taking place, you were following the response by the Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in real time. What did you see in those initial moments?

Japan's Nuclear Map and Epicenter of the Earthquakes of 3.11

Koide: It was truly a disastrous response. On the 11th I was in the laboratory in Kyoto as March was my month to work in the radiation-controlled area.³ It was normal workday hours and various tasks kept me busy working within the controlled area. Of course there is no TV or anything like that in the work space. That night there was a meeting so I came out to attend and that's when I saw the images of the Sendai airport being swept away by the tsunami. The report said that there had been a devastating earthquake and tsunami. Then I wondered about the safety of the nuclear plants.

Right then, there really was no more information. We had scheduled a nuclear safety issues seminar for the 18th. I've participated in hundreds of these seminars. Participants from the Ukraine had just arrived on the 11th. We promised to go out drinking after they arrived and so that night I went out. There was no more TV, and while there was a vague unease among us, that's how we spent the time.

The next day I learned that all power at Fukushima had been lost and I knew things were not going to be simple. Then at noon on the 12th the roof of reactor one was blown off; at that point any expert must have known there had been a reactor meltdown. So I was

certain of a core meltdown and because once it has gone this far, there is no going back, it was time to call for anyone who could evacuate to do so. I thought we were at that stage on the 12th.

Yet neither the government nor TEPCO said a single word about a core meltdown; they announced that the incident merited a 3 or 4 on the International Nuclear Event Scale. I remember thinking "You've got to be kidding! There's already been a meltdown. This is at least a level 6 or 7." But neither the government nor TEPCO gave any indication of this and there was no word of it in the media either.

One by one there were explosions at reactors 3, 4, and 2. As an expert in nuclear power, I understood there was absolutely nothing that could be done. I thought people needed to be evacuating, but still the Japanese government didn't make the call. Government officials had set up at an off-site center near a power plant in Fukushima—at first they announced evacuation inside two kilometers, then that expanded to three, five, ten, and finally twenty km. After that nothing was done. The offsite center was supposed to coordinate the emergency response in the event of an accident, but it turned out that every one of the officials fled. They left the employees behind and fled. The Japanese government's response was indescribably cruel.

Kasai: It seems the very words "meltdown" (メルtdown) and "core meltdown" (*roshin yōyū*/炉心熔融) were strictly forbidden.

Koide: Exactly.

Kasai: I was in Japan watching on TV. What shocked me was all the nuclear power experts explaining the incident in the studio. I suppose it was a satellite relay, but when reactor number three exploded on our screens they were giving their analyses of the explosion in real time. There were experts on TV saying that the reactor had a blast valve that was used successfully. Even hearing that, an average viewer might think something was amiss. But having physicists, experts on radiation, on TV saying these things, well, even the average viewer wouldn't buy that explanation. In a broad sense, nuclear experts like yourself played several roles in the media and government.

Koide: Yes, that's clearly true for pronuclear experts. They all tended to tell a story that underestimated the accident. Immediately after the accident public announcements and information were restricted. As a result individual opinions or statements were strictly forbidden and nearly all experts remained silent, so even basic information was not broadcast. Though I'd made statements from the nuclear lab beginning on the 12th, it is likely there were instructions from the Ministry of Science and Education to silence me. The head of the lab convened several meetings where he told each of us not to make any statement, that the lab would toe the official line when dealing with the mass media. I thought this was wrong and said that anyone who was asked a question by the media should answer it, further saying that if I were asked a question, I had a responsibility to answer. Since then I've continued to make statements in the media. Still the large majority of nuclear researchers were not able to do this.

As a result it was the pronuclear researchers who monopolized the interpretations - exactly. So as they went to the TV studios I think each was told: "Today, it's your turn to go to the studio." I think that's how they played their part and handled the media.

Kasai: With respect to controlling information, would you say your experience with the head of the nuclear lab shows how the professional organizations exert pressure on the

universities?

Koide: Yes, I would. The head of the lab opened a conference with all the other laboratories—even I went. There he said that any statements to the media should be on message and come only from the information office.

Kasai: So pressure came from academic conferences.

Koide: Yes, there was pressure coming from the academic conference side as well. Take for example something like a conference on nuclear power. From the very start it was never a real discussion; it was a meeting of powerful and vocal spokesmen for the nuclear community or village (*genshiryoku kyōdōtai*/原子力共同体 or *genshiryoku mura*/原子力村), which is to say the group of pronuclear government officials and private companies mainly centered around the LDP and Toshiba, Hitachi, Mitsubishi, and other pronuclear manufacturers of power plants—and of course their supporters in the media. Thus as an organization the conference was predisposed to underestimate the accident and to then promote that underestimation.

Hirano: Immediately after the accident you testified in the Diet presenting data indicating the seriousness of the disaster and demanding that the government terminate the operation of all the power plants.⁴

Koide: I did.

Hirano: After that it seems you weren't again asked to speak publicly, or given the opportunity to offer more detailed thoughts on the situation.

Koide: By "speak publicly" you mean in the Diet or in some other official government setting?

Hirano: Yes, and also in the media.

Koide: With respect to the media, I've never really had any confidence in them. Since the accident, I've been overwhelmingly busy and haven't accepted a single invitation from TV stations.

Hirano: I see. So there were invitations.

Koide: There have been many calls saying, "come down to the studio." But I always tell them that I am too busy for this sort of thing. I'd say, if you come to my office, we could meet. Many did come by, even back then. But as everyone knows, in television you might talk for an hour and none of it makes it on air, or if it does, it's maybe thirty seconds.

Hirano: Right, and only the convenient parts.

Koide: That's it and there's really nothing that can be done about it. There was, however, one outlet for which I was extremely grateful: the daily radio program called Tanemaki Journal (種まきジャーナル).⁵ There I could go on every day and offer my thoughts live. I wish it could have continued, but it was completely and totally smashed. What a world we live.

Kasai: So, on the subject of standards used for assessing the danger posed by radiation for the human body and the environment: What are your thoughts on how the government deals with this issue?

Koide: They are absolutely not dealing with it at all. I think you already know this but in Japan the average person is not supposed to be exposed to more than one milliSievert per year—that's set by law. Why is that the level decided on? Because exposure to radiation is dangerous. If exposure weren't dangerous, if low levels of exposure were safe, there'd be no problem even without that legal limit. But exposure to radiation is dangerous—this is

the conclusion of all research. So every nation in the world has set legal limits for exposure.

For people like me who get paid to work with radiation, it's not really possible to observe the 1mSv/yr limit [1mSv/yr]. We're told that in exchange for our salaries, we accept exposure to twenty milliSieverts a year. That's the standard I work under in my job. But the current Japanese government has now stated that if contamination is under 20mSv/yr somewhere, that place is safe to return to—safe to return to even for children. This is way beyond common sense.

Hirano: What is the basis of this claim? Why would the government announce these numbers and forcefully declare these areas safe to return to? What's the basis for the government's numbers?

Koide: The basis for those numbers...for example the government says that organizations like the IAEA or the ICRP [International Commission on Radiological Protection] suggest that in emergencies during which the 1mSv/yr standard cannot be maintained standards should be set between twenty and 100mSv/yr. The government seizes on this and declares that since the IAEA and the ICRP have said this, that 20mSv/yr is therefore a safe level—usually adding that membership in both the IAEA and the ICRP is voluntary anyway. But because these organizations have said this is no reason to break Japanese law. If Japan is a nation governed by the rule of law at all, surely this means that the very people who make the laws should also follow them—that should be obvious. But these guys have declared 20mSv/yr safe even for children. There is absolutely no way I can consent to this.

Hirano: So there is no scientific basis for these levels.

Koide: Well... the danger corresponds to the amount of exposure—you probably know this—so for a country that has declared its intention to maintain the 1mSv/yr standard to then turn around and ask people to endure twenty times that level, there is no scientific basis for that declaration. That's a social decision.

But if you want to inquire as to why, as I've mentioned to you, some 2.4 petaBecquerels of radioactive material have fallen on Japan, that material has been dispersed, contaminating Tohoku, Kanto, and western Japan. So in addition to the law setting the legal limit for exposure at 1mSv/yr, there is another law that states that absolutely nothing may be removed from a radioactive management area in which the levels exceed 40,000 Becquerels per square meter.

So the question becomes how many places or how much area has been contaminated beyond 40,000 Bq/m²? And according to the investigations, that answer is 140,000 km². The entirety of Fukushima prefecture has been contaminated to where all of it must be declared a radioactivity management area. Indeed, while centered on Fukushima, parts of Chiba and Tokyo have also been contaminated. The number of people living in what must be called a radiation-controlled area is in the millions, and could exceed ten million. For me, if Japan is in fact a nation governed by the rule of law, I believe the government has the responsibility to evacuate these entire communities. Instead of taking a proper action to secure people's livelihood, the government decided to leave them exposed to the real danger of radiation. In my view, Fukushima should be declared uninhabitable and the government and TEPCO should bear a legal responsibility for the people displaced and dispossessed by the nuclear disaster. That's what I think, but if that were to be done, it

would likely bankrupt the country. I think that even though it could bankrupt Japan, the government should have carried out the evacuation to set an example of what the government is supposed to do. But obviously those in and around the LDP certainly didn't agree. They've decided to sacrifice people and get by taking on as little burden as possible. So they've made the social decision to force people to endure their exposure. In my view, this is a serious crime committed by Japan's ruling elite.

I would like people to know just how many thousands of people live in this abnormal situation where even nuclear scientists like me are not allowed to enter, not to mention, drink the water. It is strange that this issue has been left out of all debate over the effects of the radioactive exposure. We must be aware that contemporary Japan continues to operate outside the law in abandoning these people to their fate by saying it's an extraordinary situation. Under such circumstances, I think, there are a multitude of symptoms of illnesses in contaminated areas. But if we're talking about any given symptom, it's hard to say since we just don't have any good epidemiological studies, or even any good data. But there will surely be symptoms, namely cancer and leukemia. However little exposure to radiation is, it causes cancer and leukemia—this is the conclusion of all current science. These symptoms are said to become visible 5 years after the initial exposure. But because radiation is not the sole cause of cancer or leukemia establishing a direct causal relationship is extremely difficult. For this very reason we need to continue to investigate the state of exposure by conducting rigorous epidemiological studies. But this government wishes instead to hide the damage so I'm afraid no such study is on the horizon. In addition, I have heard about many cases of nose bleeding, severe headaches, and extreme exhaustion. And I am truly concerned about small children and young people living in Fukushima as they are most vulnerable to exposure.

Hirano: So what is your view of the actual damages of radiation exposure on human health?

Koide: On the evening of the Fukushima dai-ichi reactor accident of March 11, 2011, a Radiation Emergency Declaration was announced. The Declaration suspended existing Japanese law concerning exposure to radiation. Though Japanese law sets the limit for exposure for the general population at one milliSievert a year [1mSv/yr], the new permissible level would be 20 mSv/yr. That Emergency Declaration is still in effect. It is common knowledge that even low levels of exposure are dangerous. Including even infants in this newly imposed 20mSv/yr standard will obviously lead to various diseases. Further, because the monitoring equipment was destroyed at the time of the accident we do not have accurate data on the exposure levels of the residents. Numerous cases of thyroid cancer have been found. The prevalence of thyroid cancer is dozens of times that of normal incidence. Pro-nuclear groups say those numbers are the result of the screening process itself, not the effect of radiation exposure. Which is to say that this was the first major screening of that population and so it was natural that many cases of thyroid cancer would be found. Put differently, what they are saying is that they have never conducted a thorough study of radiation exposure and its impact on human health. Science should acknowledge what it already knows and what it does not. If it is true that there is no established scientific data, a properly scientific approach would be to carry out a thorough investigation. To deny the damage to health by exposure to radiation without

such an investigation is absolutely at odds with the scientific spirit. Prof. Tsuda at Okayama University has already conducted a detailed study on the outbreak of thyroid cancer, showing an epidemiological-like outbreak. Just as happened at Chernobyl, as time passes it is clear there will be more and more instances of all kinds of illnesses.

Hirano: In your books you've often stated that there is no uncontaminated food. But for most Japanese, such basic knowledge seems limited to food from Fukushima, and nearby parts of Ibaraki, Gumma, Chiba, Miyagi. For food produced outside these areas, do you think it's necessary to have strict testing of food that is sold and consumed? What is to be done? Do you think food from outside these areas should also be subject to strict testing before being sent to market and consumed?

Koide: Right, as we discussed earlier, before the Fukushima accident the entire globe was already contaminated with radiation. This means that Tohoku or Kanto or Kansai food, all of it, has been contaminated with radiation—radiation from atmospheric tests. Beyond this, contamination from the 1986 Chernobyl accident reached Japan on the prevailing westerly winds, meaning that all Japanese food was contaminated. And on top of all this, with the Fukushima disaster, as I mentioned, it is not that a thick layer of contamination has dispersed to every corner of the globe from Fukushima, but that this thick layer of contamination is right now centered on Fukushima.

So if we were to carefully measure the levels of food contamination, we'd more or less find moving out from the highest levels in Fukushima to say western Japan or Kyushu, that the numbers would gradually decline to the lower levels received from the atmospheric tests. Right now the people of Fukushima have been abandoned in the areas of the highest levels of radiation. And abandoned people have to find a way to live. Farmers produce agricultural goods, dairy farmers produce dairy products, and ranchers produce meat; these people must do so in order to live. They are not the ones to be blamed at all.

As the Japanese state is absolutely unreliable in this matter, these people have no choice but to go on producing food in that place, all the while suffering further exposure. So I don't think we can throw out the food they produce there under those conditions. Inevitably someone has to consume that food—I suggest it be fed to the pronuclear lobby (laughs). We should serve all of the most heavily contaminated food at say the employee cafeteria at TEPCO or in the cafeteria for Diet members in the Diet building. But that isn't nearly enough. We must carefully inspect the food, and once we've determined what foods have what levels of contamination, once that is fully measured and delineated, then those who have the corresponding levels of responsibility should eat it, should be given it. Now of course strict levels of responsibility cannot really be allotted one by one to individuals that way, so when it comes to this food, I would propose devising a "60 and over" system. The most contaminated foods could only be eaten by those 60 years old and older, and from there also have food for "50 and over," "40 and over," "30 and over" - giving the best food to children. For example, school lunches would get the most uncontaminated food available—there'd still be contamination from the atmospheric tests—but food with only those levels would be given to children and only adults would receive the contaminated food. That would be my proposal.

My proposal would first be a precise measurement, starting from Fukushima and then of course including western Japan and Kyushu, to sort out the levels and then determine the

relative burdens. I am aware that this is a controversial proposal, but each one of us, especially those who built postwar Japan, bears responsibility for allowing our society to heavily dependent on nuclear energy without carefully reflecting on the risks and consequences of it. And more importantly, we have the responsibility for protecting children.

Kasai: Recently, that idea has been suggested in Nishio Masamichi's *Radioactive Archipelago* (*Hibaku retto*/『被ばく列島』). You've just stressed that though the first step must be a rigorous measurement, right now that is simply impossible.

Koide: Right, completely impossible.

Kasai: So, that's true of water as well. First I don't think most people know how to measure the levels in water. You've already said how the current minimum standards are worthless, that below a certain threshold it would be displayed as "ND" (Not Detectable). For example, for tap water, up to 20 Becquerels would be posted as "ND," exactly as if there was no radiation detected at all. Yet even with all these doubts on measurement, we must start with it, though it's a dizzyingly long road ahead. But what do you think can be done to change this situation for the better?

Koide: Right now Japan has a standard of 100Bq/kg for general foodstuffs. Before the Fukushima disaster, Japanese foodstuffs were contaminated—by the atmospheric tests—at a level of 0.1Bq/kg. Of course there were some foods with less contamination and some with more. Still, roughly speaking it was 0.1Bq/kg. So when you're talking 100 Bq/kg that's allowing 1,000 times the [pre-Fukushima] levels.

As I said before, any exposure is absolutely dangerous. And the dangers increase corresponding to an increase in levels of exposure; this is the conclusion of all research. 100 Bq/kg is dangerous, 99 is dangerous, as is 90, and 50, and 10—they are all dangerous. 10 Bq/kg is 100 times the pre-Fukushima levels.

So I think it's necessary to precisely measure the levels of contamination. As many people are living in a state of anxiety, groups like consumers' cooperatives and other sorts of organizations are trying to measure the contamination on their own. But the measuring devices that these groups are able to get, such as the ones called NAI, these devices can only measure levels above 20Bq/kg. While this means that they can measure levels as little as one-fifth of the national thresholds, from my perspective even this lower level is far too high.

And the worst thing that could happen is thinking that any contamination below the detectable limits of these machines, meaning below 20Bq/kg, would be misunderstood as being free of contamination, and then having the Fukushima prefectural government actively using this data as good news: "measurements below the detectable limits of the device must be clean; we can even serve this food in school cafeterias," or PR campaigns announcing "Fukushima produce is safe." Of course it would be totally outrageous and unthinkable and yes I think every effort should be made to serve the least contaminated food in school cafeterias—but the reality is that any food tested below detectable levels is distributed to schools as safe produce.

I think we need to stop this situation, and technically speaking, I think several germanium semiconductor detectors must be deployed instead. But a germanium detector would cost from \$100,000 to \$200,000. And in order to use it, the detector needs to be kept at 150 degree below zero Celsius. So these are not devices that the average citizen is going to be

able to use.

So no matter how dedicated any individual citizen may be, there are real limitations when it comes to measuring radiation levels. If you ask me what should be done, for example when faced with Cs-137 or Sr-90, what should be done about these contaminants? Well these contaminants were produced in a nuclear reactor at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi plant and it means that they are unmistakably TEPCO's property. And if their private property is found to have contaminated other areas they have undeniable responsibility for it. So I think this is something that is required of TEPCO. I think it is TEPCO's responsibility to precisely measure which foods have been contaminated, and to what extent, and then to report the results to the public. I think this is something the public should demand. After TEPCO the government also has responsibility—they gave their seal of approval to TEPCO after all. So the public should also demand that the government precisely measure the levels and publish the results.

Because there are limits to what one can do on one's own, I think we need a movement that forces the government and TEPCO to take responsibility for the precise measurement of the contamination.

Hirano: Some have raised doubts over precisely this kind of rigorous measurement citing possible damage caused by rumors or misinformation (*fūhyōhigai*/風評被害), but to me this sort of criticism is tainted with a sort of "national morality" discourse (*kokumin dōtokuron*/国民道徳論).

Koide: Yes, I think so.

Hirano: There seems to be a very strong sense of dividing people into those who are seen as patriotic and those who are seen as un-Japanese (*hikokumin*/非国民).

Koide: For me, I've been making statements on the Fukushima contamination. These statements have been denounced and even made some angry with me. But the contamination is real. For a long time now I've been the kind of person who would rather hear the truth, no matter how awful, than to remain ignorant. I am absolutely not going to hide the truth; no matter how much criticism I have to take I am going to diligently report the truth. Yeah, a lot of people get angry with me. (Laughs).

Kasai: On this point, this year saw the publishing of Kariya Tetsu's manga series *Oi shinbo: Fukushima no shinjitsu* (『美味しんぼ – 福島の実』).⁶ It would seem a kind of political campaign was developed to attack it. What is your take on this?

Koide: The editors sent me a copy and I've read it. It's an awesome manga. In this day and age we just don't have this kind of detailed manga on this problem and I am grateful for it. And more, *Oi shinbo* talks about the nosebleeds [caused by radiation]. The nosebleeds are real. Lots of Fukushima residents are said to be suffering from nosebleeds. Itokawa, the mayor of Futaba machi, has shown us proof. One of my acquaintances often talks about the nosebleeds.

It was true at Chernobyl, too. But nosebleeds have not been definitively and scientifically linked to exposure to radiation.⁷ Still there is no denying that it is real and happening. So even if current science is unable to explain it, it's for science to ask just what is going on? Science has a duty to explain this, to tell the truth without obfuscation. No matter the reasons, we should be allowed to tell the truth. So for me I don't think there is anything wrong with this part of *Oi shinbo*.

Kasai: I think *Oi shinbo* clearly exposed the politically constructed narratives "damage from rumor or misinformation" and "emotional bonds" (*kizuna*/絆) as fictions, and so for this reason it appears it had to be crushed.

Koide: Exactly. But Kariya, the author of *Oi shinbo*, is not one of the criminals responsible for the Fukushima disaster. Rather the government officials who caused the Fukushima disaster are the criminals. Yet it is these same government bureaucrats who now come out and complain that this manga is out of order. I say, "No, it's you who are out of order. We need to send you to prison right now."

But isn't it always the case that a criminal who has committed a crime remains unquestioned and so starts bashing those who are telling the truth? When that happens I think the problem is precisely this word you just used "emotional bonds." Since Fukushima, I have come to hate this word. (Laughs).

Hirano: "Bonds" seems to be the new nationalism, doesn't it?

Koide: Yes, yes it does.

Hirano: You've often said that the Japanese economy and the people's lifestyle would be fine even without a single nuclear power plant. In fact, since the government shut all the nuclear reactors down, the people have experienced no real trouble at all. In addition, considered in light of world standards we still have material riches and a lifestyle of surplus. Given this, what are your thoughts on the call to restart the reactors? For what purpose, what reason do you think the government has?⁸

Koide: First of all, the power companies don't want to go bankrupt. In other words, the heads of the power companies do not want to take personal responsibility. For example, if the reactors are restarted and there's an accident, are the heads of the power companies going to be punished? We already know that they will not be. Even after the Fukushima disaster neither the chairman, nor the CEO, nor anyone below—not a single person—was punished.⁹ It certainly looks as if the reactors are restarted and there's an accident, the heads of the power companies would not be required to take any responsibility. The heads of the power companies, from Kyushu Electric to Kansai Electric, have received this message loud and clear.

What's more, if the nuclear power plants are idled and not allowed to restart, then all the capital they represent becomes a non-performing asset. And of course this is anathema to anyone in management.

Hirano: If we could return to a technical discussion specifically how to decommission a reactor. As have others in your field you've already stated that a full end game cannot be envisioned yet. Still could you talk about what makes this issue so difficult?

Koide: By decommissioning you mean the endpoint of the Fukushima reactors?

Hirano: Yes, what does it mean for Fukushima dai-ichi?

Koide: When we say decommission we basically mean: How do we fully contain the radiation? At least I think that's the main point. Now this is impossible if we don't know the status of the melted core. Though it's been four years since the disaster we simply do not know where the core is or in what state it is.

This is a situation that only happens in nuclear accidents. However large a chemical plant explosion may be there'd probably be an initial fire, but usually after several days, perhaps weeks you'd still be able to go on site and investigate. You'd be able to see just how things broke down. And in some situations might even be able to fix them. But with

an accident at a nuclear plant you cannot even go on site four years later—probably not even ten years later.

Hirano: Because the contamination is so severe that no one can come close to it.

Koide: Yes. For humans going there means instant death, so the only way at all is to use robots. But robots are extremely vulnerable to radiation. Consider, robots receive their instructions through series of 1s and 0s, so should the radiation switch a 0 to a 1 you'd end up with completely different instructions. Essentially robots are useless. Even if you are able to send them in they can never return. Because this has been the case up to now, the only way left in the end might be to use robots that try to avoid exposure or that are built as much as possible to withstand exposure, but that is no simple thing.

So it means until we figure out what to do it would still take many years. Once you understand this fact you can start thinking about what can be done. And at the very least the "road map" devised by the government and TEPCO is the most absolutely optimistic road map that there could be. They are convinced that the melted core fell through the bottom of the pressure vessel and now lie at the bottom of the containment vessel—basically piling up like nuggets of the melted core. There's no way this would be the case. (Laughs).

As the severity of the disaster became clear, water was repeatedly thrown on the reactors. This water would evaporate and dissipate continuously. That was the actual situation. There is no way that the melted core would have stayed as slimy liquid and then piled up like so many little nuggets. It should have been scattered all over the place. This is how the government and TEPCO's roadmap goes: The buns would stay at the bottom of the containment vessel, above which is the reactor pressure vessel—a steel pressure furnace. With the furnace floor broken open, there is a hollow at the bottom through which the melted core must have leaked.

So at some point both the containment vessel and the pressure vessel would be filled with water and they'll be able to see the nuggets of melted core by looking from above down into the water. They say the nuggets (the fallen material), yes, that they sit some thirty to forty meters below the water's surface, that they'll eventually be able to grab and remove them. This is all it takes, according to the government and TEPCO's roadmap. Not a chance. This simply cannot be done.

Hirano: Obviously we can't confirm or really say anything definitive about the situation in the reactors, but what do you think has happened?

Koide: I simply don't know. But as I have mentioned, this whole "nugget" scenario is just not the case, and so I think the materials are scattered all over the place. Though the containment vessel is made of steel, if the melted core has come in contact with that steel, just as it ate through the floor of the pressure vessel, it could possibly have melted through the containment vessel. Depending on how things developed this, too, is a possibility. Unfortunately, I simply do not know.

Hirano: If that is in fact the situation, what steps are necessary?

Koide: First, as we talked about earlier, radiation must be prevented from being released into the environment. As I consider this task as "decommissioning" or the final containment of the accident, I think in order to prevent the release into the environment you must do whatever you can starting from the worst-case scenario.

There are situations in which the containment vessel can suffer a melt-through. I think

this likely has already happened. And if it has happened what should be done? Outside the reactor there flows ground water. If the melted core were to come in contact with the ground water, the whole situation would be unmanageable. While this may have already happened, in order to get any kind of control over the situation, some sort of barrier must be built to prevent the melted core from reaching the ground water. I've been saying this since May 2011—and they have not done a thing.

Kasai: This barrier would be an ice dam, a wall of super-chilled soil.

Koide: That's the most recent idea. But it simply cannot be done successfully. It would cost billions of dollars. And it would fail. And when it did fail they'd say there's nothing to be done but build a concrete wall. No matter how foolish an idea may be, they'll just keep moving from failure to failure.

But really, for the construction companies that's a good thing. I think Kashima would be the ones to build the super-chilled earth wall, for some billions of dollars. And if it doesn't work—they wouldn't have to take responsibility. Next they'd build an impermeable concrete wall. Several huge construction firms (*zenekon*/ゼネコン) would be contracted and would all make billions.

But considered from the perspective of actually ending the disaster, it would be a series of failures. Personally, I think an underground, impermeable wall needs to be built immediately. They are not going to be able to remove the material. All that can be done is to contain it. Underground the wall needs to be strengthened; above ground the only choice is some sort of sarcophagus like the one they built over Chernobyl. But even this would take dozens of years—I'll probably be dead by then.

Kasai: There are temporary tanks sitting on land for this water, but they are starting to leak. What should be done about this contaminated water? There's not enough space for all of it on land; it cannot be controlled; and every year the volume grows larger.

Koide: The radioactive water has penetrated the coastline around the Fukushima Daiichi. Underground water in the large area of Fukushima has been seriously contaminated. And at some point those contaminated water tanks will fail. I thought we must do everything that we possibly could. Already in March of 2011 there was some 100,000 tons of contaminated water. Even then I proposed moving it but didn't get anywhere with it. Now there's up-to 400,000 tons. In the near—meaning not too distant—future there will be nothing left but to release it into the sea.¹⁰ The water contains plutonium 239 and its release into the Ocean has both local and global impacts. A microgram of plutonium can cause death if inhaled.

Contaminated Water Tanks

Kasai: It appears that they are already moving toward that direction a little at a time aren't they.

Koide: The Nuclear Regulatory Committee has been hinting at the possibility of releasing it into the ocean.

Kasai: They have been trying to persuade the fishing cooperatives and others to allow the release.

Koide: Yes, they have.

Kasai: Something that has not been much of a topic of discussion today is decontamination. It has become a rather large industry, in other words, "the exposure industry" (*hibaku sangyō*/被曝産業). Do you think decontamination is really meaningful and effective?

Koide: Yes, I do. And we must do it. But, to say that because we've decontaminated some area that the whole issue is resolved, or that people may safely live in a decontaminated place—I think that is a real problem.

First, fundamentally, people must not be forced to live in contaminated areas that must be decontaminated. First must come complete evacuation. The state must take on the responsibility to allow whole communities to evacuate. Of course, they did not do this.

Briefly, I use the word "decontamination" (*josen*/除染), which is a compound word written with the characters for "remove" and "stain." But this is something that cannot be completed when it comes to radiation, so the original sense of the word "removal of contaminants" is impossible. But as long as people are abandoned in the contaminated areas, I believe all possible actions should be taken to lessen their exposure. It is essential that the contamination be removed as far away as possible, to be transported far from where people live. For this reason I prefer to call it "[toxic] relocation" (*isen*/移染).

But even if this is done, that does not mean that the radiation has been erased. This stuff contaminates everything from mountains to what have you, it gets into the space of people's lives. When that happens it must be removed. But removal merely means moving it around—it does not mean eliminating it. It means another job is waiting to handle the contaminated materials that get moved around.

Right now the authorities say they want various prefectures and other local governments to build a temporary storage and bury the accumulated contamination there.

We talked about this before, but the contaminants themselves were clearly formerly in the reactor at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi plant and are therefore also clearly TEPCO's property. So while it is residents who are doing the hard work of collecting all these contaminants, I think it would be right and just for these contaminants to be returned to TEPCO. Earlier prof. Kasai told us the contaminants were being called "no-one's property" (*mushubutsu*/無主物), but I say in all seriousness, the conclusion of my logic here is to say to TEPCO: "Hey, this is your crap" and return it to them. That way the residents are not forced to accept the stuff, TEPCO is. The best solution is to return all of the material back to the Fukushima Daiichi plant, but that is not possible. Right now that place is a battlefield between poorly paid workers and the radiation, so I don't see this as a possibility.

What I would most like to do is have TEPCO's headquarters buried under all the radiation, but whenever I say this people just laugh. (laughs)

I do have a second proposal. Fifteen kilometers south of Fukushima Daiichi [Fukushima 1] is the Fukushima dai-ni [Fukushima 2] nuclear plant. There is a lot of wide open space

there. So first off we would return the Fukushima 1 contamination to TEPCO there. I think there would be enough space, but if there were not, the rest could be taken to TEPCO's Kashiwazaki Kariya nuclear plant. It's the world's largest nuclear plant and so there is a lot of space. I think turning that place into a nuclear waste site is a good idea.

Lately I've been invited to Kashiwazaki¹¹ and talked about it. I think I've become a hated man there. (Laughs). But I think taking full responsibility for various actions is the most important thing. And when it comes to this particular disaster no one has greater responsibility than TEPCO. As I think it important for one to take full responsibility, if Fukushima 2 doesn't work out, then Kashiwazaki Kariya is the only other option.

Hirano: State expenditures for decontamination have supposedly reached one trillion yen.

Koide: It's more than that.

Hirano: This summer I spent some time in Iitate village. Of course at the time the place was crawling with decontamination workers. It was a truly bizarre scene. I had the feeling of running around on a moonscape. Of course there were no residents there—just decontamination workers in strange gear, trucks running all over the place. Looking at that scene, being shown the actual work of decontamination, it seemed to be an excruciatingly slow—even endless—endeavor. I mean they were scrubbing everything with small brushes. I was able to ask the workers a few questions—off the record. Many were people from Hokkaido, Okinawa, and Fukushima who had lost their homes. It was a collection of modern day migrant workers and victims of disaster. They said that they work for just 15,000 yen a day.

I asked them if they thought their work was doing any good. They said they needed the money and honestly had no way of knowing if this sort of minute and delicate work would remove the contamination.

Was this a mistake? Is scrubbing everything by hand and then dumping it all in the ground really the only way to decontaminate an area?

Decontamination Workers

Koide: Well I think both that it is and it isn't effective. For example, when they first started the decontamination work, what they did was blasting everything with high-pressure water hoses. That's bad. All that does is get all the contamination moving around. It's really just dispersing it.

Some of my colleagues have said that is a bad method. Be it a roof or a wall, you shouldn't just douse it with water. To really remove the contamination, you would first cover it with something that could prevent the escape of radioactivity then knock down the radiated structure, tear it all off, and then fold it up and collect it all. I think that's probably true. But it takes a long time.

I think there are effective ways of doing it and I think there are ineffective ways. Still it is fundamentally impossible to erase the contamination and so it must be moved. The only thing we should be doing is thinking about the easiest way to relocate it all.

Hirano: That's the meaning of "effective" in this situation isn't it.

Koide: Right. So the current method may be rather small in scale. But for me even small-scale methods are necessary. As long as people are living there everything is necessary. Of course, there's legitimate criticism over the fact that this is a decontamination business and that the large construction companies are getting rich, but again, for me, as long as there are abandoned people still living there it all must be done.

Hirano: It was really a shock going there and seeing it. To see those workers and, honestly, their lack of conviction for the work. It was a really weird scene. No real enthusiasm, but rather one day after the other, contingent labor. The media has reported that the workers come from a few particular prefectures, but actually being there and talking to them, I could really get a true sense of the structure of economic inequality in Japan, that this sort of work found this kind of person, a person coming from economically precarious and socially marginalized backgrounds. In fact, you come to understand that decontamination work depends on these people.

For example, decontamination, or your preferred "relocation," couldn't those jobs be made more equitable—say by requiring TEPCO office workers, especially executives, to do it?

Koide: I've said that.

Hirano: You have? (Laughs).

Kasai: So...about the airborne radiation dosage and the soil contamination, there is a public entity that measures and publishes the airborne levels. But the soil contamination is not measured. I remember reading about Chernobyl that the soil contamination levels are the standard by which one gets the right to evacuation and refuge. But Japan only measures the air. And there are those who doubt the accuracy of the levels recorded. I thought the soil contamination had not been measured yet, but from what you mentioned earlier, we do know the extent of the contamination, don't we?

Koide: Yes, we do.

Kasai: The actual levels?

Koide: With respect to soil contamination we more or less know the extent of it. We largely know which prefectures, which towns, and which villages—as well as how badly—have been contaminated. Four years after the disaster it has moved around. Radiation moves through the environment; it has a material existence and also does die out. I'm sure much has changed since immediately following the accident. We have the data necessary to draw a map of the situation immediately following the accident, but we don't have the data necessary to draw a map of the contamination today. That said, we basically know the extent of the soil contamination.

Kasai: Who is it that is making these measurements?

Koide: It is basically the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Some local governments took part as well. Some independent groups, as well as some local governments, took part in taking measurements back then. But for us the number one data source is the US military.

Hirano: I see; how is that?

Koide: They worked at truly amazing speed-and accuracy.

Hirano: Sorry if this next thought seems a bit of a tangent, but right after the accident both the US and Japan were looking at the same data. But their interpretations of it were extremely far apart. The US ordered all of its personnel to evacuate an area 80 km from Fukushima. While Japan's largest evacuation zone was 20 km. Where does this disparity in evacuation zones come from? They are both looking at the same data. How do they arrive at such definitive and divergent judgments?

Koide: Well...and this was true for me, too, any nuclear specialist would have known on March 11th-March 12th at the latest-that there had been a meltdown. And this means, quite simply, that control had been lost. And once control is lost you simply don't know what is going to happen next-or that's what you must think at the time. Disaster preparedness must always imagine the worst-case scenario. If you don't plan for the worst-case scenario it will be too late. What the US did was believe there had been a worst-case scenario-a meltdown-and so moved to take care of its people. That's why they ordered an 80 km evacuation. I think this was the correct strategy. Japan didn't do this. Japan was always thinking of the ideal, the best case scenario. They had to be thinking they could still get control and based their policy on that optimistic assumption. So they only declared a 20 km evacuation zone. I would say that from this conclusion two things may unfold: one is their desire to see this as a best-case scenario and the other is their inability to deal with it.

Hirano: What do you mean by their inability?

Bags containing contaminated soil. This apocalyptic scene extends infinitely in the villages near the Fukushima dai-ichi

Koide: In a word, the Japanese state is incapable of functioning adequately when dealing with a disaster. That's why they evacuated those within 20 km by bus but when it came to the 30 km zone they told those who could easily evacuate to do so and for all others to merely close their doors and windows.

Hirano: So there was no emergency management.

Koide: None. There simply is not a single person in the Japanese government who had thought an accident like this was possible. They all immediately fled the off-site center and so there was absolutely no emergency management—there couldn't be. And because management was now impossible, there were no announcements. Even if they had declared an 80 km evacuation zone there were no emergency shelters. They had made no preparations, so there was nothing to be done.

Hirano: Last summer I interviewed Murakami Tetsuya ¹² Just as the accident was happening he reached out to the government. But he got no response. He went to the prefecture. No response from them either. In the end he just used his own judgment. So really there was essentially zero emergency management in place. His thoughts at the time were to get the whole village to emigrate; that really there was nothing to do but to buy land and move to Hokkaido. He said these were his actual plans at the time. In fact, it would seem that the myth of safety has so totally permeated the bureaucracy that there

really is no one who thinks about these things—wouldn't you say?

Koide: That's right. Not a single nuclear expert or policy maker ever seriously considered the possibility of an accident like this. I knew accidents were possible, and that when they happened the damage would be enormous; I had been commenting on the possibility, referring to some results of simulations. But still I would have thought the kind of disaster that happened at Fukushima was some kind of impossible nightmare—yet it actually happened. It was like the worse nightmare becoming a reality. And if even I thought this then all those pronuclear people surely never gave it a moment's thought. And so when it actually happened, no one had thought about, let alone built a system to deal with it.

II The Responsibility of the Scientist and the Citizen

Kasai: In your books and lectures you often express strong respect for Tanaka Shōzō.¹³ Can you connect what you've just said to this as well?

Koide: Sure. I first became aware of Shōzō when I was in the student movement during the 1970s. This was a time when there was close attention paid to Japan's many pollution incidents, such as at Minamata. Personally I was working on nuclear power, but it was a time when, like it or not, we learned of all the harm that came along with building Japan into a modern nation. What I got from Shōzō was this epiphany that just like the Minamata disease right there before our eyes these sorts of pollution incidents went way back in Japanese history. With Japan's decision to cast off Asia and follow the West after the Meiji Ishin of 1868 came these sorts of incidents, and the question within that was just how should one live? I learned the way Shōzō lived his life. I thought: Wow, it is possible to live that way; I must do it. Unfortunately I am completely unable to do so, but I never stop thinking that Shōzō's was a wonderful way to live a life.

Hirano: Going back to an earlier discussion. You've repeatedly talked about the government's responsibility, scientists' responsibility, and individual responsibility. It would seem that this word "responsibility" is an extremely important keyword for you. You often emphasize it in your writing, too. What I want to ask concerns the issue of scientists' special responsibility, a particular social responsibility. Scientists are often thought of as technicians, but this is not really the case. As a result, I feel you've pursued an intense interrogation of yourself as a scientist. As you've said you are not going to enter politics, could you connect this discussion of scientific responsibility to your earlier discussion of doing all that has fallen to you personally to do? How should we think about these two things?

Koide: I am in science and as such I have to take on the responsibility of a scientist—Just as a politician must take political responsibility. I think I mentioned this to you the last time, but I am an absolute individualist (*tetteiteki na kojinhugisha*/徹底的な個人主義者). I don't want to be constrained by anyone. I want to be able to decide my own life for myself. But because I've made this choice by myself I must also take full responsibility for that choice.

It's two sides of the same coin. I don't take orders from anyone. And this means that I alone bear the responsibility. It's really as simple as saying: I'm a scientist and so I have the responsibility of a scientist.

Hirano: On this way of thinking about responsibility: "Who is the subject responsible?"—this way of thinking about it seems to be quite absent in contemporary Japan.

Koide: Right. People living in Japan today have not made decisions as individuals. They just "go with the flow;" as long as they follow the "authorities" whom they believe will guarantee the happiness of their individual selves. This seems true of education, too. Go to a slightly better school; get into a slightly better company; grow a bit more rich, a bit more grand. I think everyone is swept up in this current, and it's really senseless. I think it is extremely important that each and every individual live out their individuality. The absolute worst thing is for everyone to become blindly obedient to the "authorities," yet this is the Japan we find ourselves in today. And so no one takes any responsibility. Living in such a society it is too easy to say, "It can't be helped." Everyone is thus able to blame the society as a whole; "It can't be helped." And so no one takes any individual responsibility.

The most extreme and obvious example was the war. Everyone would say: "It's not my fault; I was deceived. The military were the culprits." Saying this allows people to remain at a distance, indifferent. It is bad news for a nation when its citizens have only this view of responsibility.

Hirano: You've declared, "I am an absolute individualist." Personally I am very interested in that statement. So could you speak a bit more concretely about the meaning of your individualism for how one lives a life? In other words, could you explain just what you mean by this "individualism?"

That is, in Japan being individualistic is more often a way to say egotistical; a sort of disregard of others. One should pursue one's own interests—in English the word is "selfish" — egocentric — pursue your own egotistic advantage. Now this seems completely different from the way you use the term. Could you speak directly to this difference?

Koide: I think you've just done so.

Hirano: Did I? (Laughs). So that's it then, just as I said? Still it's clearly not selfishness.

Koide: No, I don't think it's about interests.

Hirano: It's about values isn't it?

Koide: Yes, it's about personal values. You and I are different people. I am different again from Mr. Kasai. Why? Well our genetic information is different. I received a bundle of information from my parents. You and Mr. Kasai, too, are influenced by your genetic information. Every one of the over one hundred million Japanese is a unique human being; and every one of the over 7.3 billion people on earth are unique individuals. History may keep moving on, and there is a big, wide world here on this planet earth. That said, right now, at this moment, and right now, in this place, I exist as an irreplaceable being. It is nothing but an absolute truth. You normally live in Los Angeles, but right now at this moment you are a person who is here. Mr. Kasai has come down from Tokyo. While acknowledging all the implications of being within the flow of history, we are all right here, right now.

In other words, every single individual human being has a different way of living a life; they are each unique. They have each lived a life that absolutely no one else could have lived. It is a real loss if they don't live up to their full potential. Those are my thoughts. So for my own unique self, and so for your own unique self, and Mr. Kasai's own unique self, none of us should be compelled by someone else to do something (*meirei o sarete*/命令されて). If we don't live our lives according to the will coming from deep within ourselves, that's a real loss; we must all live with our values coming from within

ourselves.

I am going to retire next March, but though I am the lowest ranked employee here—above me are assistant professors and professors — because of the peculiar arrangements of working where I do, I am not compelled to take orders from anyone. I am the lowest ranked so of course there is also no one below me to order around. So I am in a position where I never take nor give orders. For me this is the ideal position to be in.

And so I can live out my own life according to my own values; I'm allowed to live a life that suits me. Now I found myself in this position largely by accident, and then chose to continue to live my life this way. Related to this, I am a human being and so will make mistakes, but these mistakes will be things that I have chosen, things that I have personally done so there is nothing to do but to take responsibility for them. This is what I mean when I say that responsibility is an extremely important word.

Hirano: Well, you've exhaustively criticized this competitive society. You've said that this competitive society has ruined Japan and destroyed life based on what you call responsibility.

Koide: Yes. Everyone is running towards the exact same goal. It's ludicrous. You want to go that way; I want to go this way. I think this would be the ideal society. Full mutual recognition is a good thing.

Hirano: Does your view come from your personal experience? In your books you state that you were a really conscientious student when you were younger (laughs).

Koide: (laughs) Well, yes.

Hirano: You studied extremely hard. Did everything extremely hard. You continued this in your nuclear research in college believing that a new energy source was cheap and good for everyone. You must have thought this was a great thing.

Koide: That's right.

Hirano: But you eventually noticed that it was all wrong. So on this, from deep in your own experience, it's an individual history, an individual experience, in one sense it's connected to your current individualism, to how you live your life focused on the important things to you.

Koide: I think that's right. So, well, when I was young, in my late teens, I was consumed by the dream of nuclear power. I devoted my life to it. That was all a mistake—it did not take me too long to realize that.

Hirano: When did it happen? In graduate school?

Koide: My third year in university.

Hirano: Third year—so as an undergraduate.

Koide: Yes, I came to this realization in the latter half of my undergraduate studies. It was foolish and I curse myself for it, but I didn't quit. To this day I've lived my life as someone who made that wrong choice, and there is nothing to do but make amends for that choice. At a minimum I wanted to get rid of nuclear power before there was a bad accident. I guess I've lived with this wish for over forty years—but that wish stayed out of reach. And here we have had the accident so my life has been for nothing. You could say that thing I wanted most to do has been denied. Really, what have I lived for? I think about that from time to time.

As this was my choice I have to accept it. So while the meaning of my life may have been lost, still I was able to live my own life as I pleased, without submitting to the orders of

others and without ordering others around—for this I am grateful. My hopes were never realized. History is full of that kind of thing. Likely very few people see their hopes fulfilled. And while in my case they were rejected, I was able to live the life I wanted and that is a life to be grateful for.

Hirano: In a way, it's just how Tanaka Shōzō lived his life isn't it?

Koide: Yes it is. That is what I like about Shōzō.

Hirano: On that point. His life, too, was a defeat.

Koide: Complete and total defeat.

Hirano: Still, he used all sorts of means, and followed all the way through on his beliefs.

Hirano: So getting back to Fukushima, it seems when it comes to the life choices of the so-called Japanese elites, they seem caught in a system in which they will succeed and become famous by crushing their individuality and subsuming it under some organization in order to get ahead in a society and achieve fame and status. And the education system seems to be promoting this lifestyle where these sorts of people are created through intense competition. I think the very end result of this social and educational system was revealed, and it exploded in an explicit and ugly manner through various problems the Fukushima disaster has posed.

Koide: Yes, I think so. You said it.

Hirano: I see. In one sense it would have been possible even for these Japanese elites to make their personal responsibility clear and take appropriate actions only if they had lived a life based on individualism as you suggested.

Koide: Yes I think such a possibility exists, but unfortunately in Japan today that possibility has been completely crushed. It was abundantly clear from the Fukushima disaster that no one in this country is going to take responsibility.

Hirano: You've already talked about how TEPCO and the government made huge mistakes in dealing with the problem immediately after the accident. What do you see as the definitive mistake that led to this disaster?

Koide: There's a ton of them. Any specialist would have known right away there had been a meltdown, and that everyone needed to be evacuated immediately. And evacuating to 20 km away is totally inadequate. Iitate village some 40-50 km away received an enormous amount of contamination and was neglected for over a month.

Soma residents evacuated to Iitate, this kind of stupidity cannot stand, the government's criminal mistakes.

The Hosokawa family of Iitate Village continues to live in the heavily radiated area to look after their horses (2014). More than a dozen horses died since 2011.

Kasai: I'm deeply taken by your previous discussion on responsibility. It's really a story of something with no owner. A golf course that has had to close because it is considered contaminated with radiation from TEPCO's plant has recently sued. TEPCO's top attorneys argued in defense that the radiation is not their property, which would make it no one's property and therefore TEPCO is not responsible. It seems the opposite of what you've just said about responsibility, to be sure, yet this declaration of complete lack of

responsibility, once passed through the logic and system of the courts, these lawyers have arrived at precisely this conclusion. It is not a question of individual responsibility; it is a problem of the social system. Lack of any responsibility is the basis of the entire social system. What are your thoughts on this?

Koide: It's exactly as you say. This is what it has come to. I couldn't care less about a country like that. But in order to overcome this situation, it's something I mentioned earlier, but there is no way but for rather foolish citizens to get smarter. Only each individual standing up for his or her own way is going to do it.

Hirano: You've also talked about "responsibility for being fooled." You've said that even the deceived are guilty and stressed that they too must take responsibility. How do you think about this at the individual level? For example, you've often stated that there should be a new food labeling system put in place by which especially the generation that agreed to build the reactors would be obliged to eat the contaminated food—would this be an example of taking individual responsibility for you?

Koide: Yes, that's exactly what I mean. So, because I think that every Japanese adult has responsibility for both allowing the rampant development of nuclear power and the Fukushima disaster, I said that they should be the ones to eat the contaminated food. And so that this disaster may never happen again, nuclear power must be eliminated—of course there should be no question of restarting the reactors. Yet, what I've just said is not really a widespread idea. Slowly all the reactors are being restarted.

Hirano: So in that sense Japanese citizens' responsibility is increasing in that they are allowing the restart of the reactors.

Koide: I think the nuclear power issue is precisely analogous to the war.

Hirano: Indeed, as with the damage of misinformation and national morality discourse we talked about and the pressure that comes from those hints of someone being somehow "un-Japanese," it seems to really resemble the war.

Koide: I think so, yes.

Hirano: I'd like to ask more about the responsibility for being misled. Up to now the reason most would say that nuclear power has been allowed is the myth of safety—a myth invented by the coordination of the government, TEPCO, and the media. So Japanese citizens have been robbed of being told the truth, of having the chance to know the truth.

Koide: That's true.

Hirano: So the likely response to your position would be that it's unjust to blame those who were robbed of the chance to know the truth. How would you answer this challenge?

Koide: I also said that the current situation is just like during the war. Then, too, the media only reported the information coming from imperial headquarters: The Japanese military enjoyed nothing but a string of victories. We were all told that because of the emperor Japan was a divine country and therefore could not lose. You would go to school and there would be the emperor's portrait hanging on the wall. There was a place where the emperor was enshrined right there on school grounds. Every child was taught that the emperor was present there.

In such a country it wasn't strange to think that Japan would win the war. But those who knew more about the world, including of course those in the military, knew that Japan could not win. Still they said nothing. And so everyone was swept along with the current. But history is harsh, and in the end Japan was battered. And people at that time said, "Ah,

we've been misled. The military are the culprits." But even within all of this there were those who resisted the war. The number of people tortured and killed by the Special Higher Police was huge. And those people, too, were labeled as "un-Japanese" and ostracized from society by the majority of the population. Whole families, whole groups of people were obliterated.

So those who lived then were duped, they were given false information. But should they say that's where their responsibility ends? I would respond that even if they were duped, the duped still bear the responsibility of the duped. How did each and every one of them live their lives during the war? How did they deal with the information they were being given? I think we need to include these kinds of questions when we interrogate ourselves over taking responsibility. Now if you say this people get angry but I think without question the emperor has absolute responsibility for the war. We ended up moving on without trying to pursue the emperor's war responsibility.

Even today you'll see people happily shouting "Tennō heika banzai," Long Live the Emperor. At midnight NHK will broadcast the Japanese flag flapping in the wind. I can't stand that and so don't watch TV. Most Japanese get happy when they hear 'honorable' addresses by His Majesty the Emperor or news about the imperial family. From the bottom of my heart I think we should have pursued his war crimes and punished him with whatever it takes, including execution. I have been saying this and people get very angry.

I am told not to criticize the emperor. They say if I do I'll harm the anti-nuclear movement.

Hirano: Even people in the anti-nuclear movement warn you about things like that? A critical reference to the emperor's wartime responsibility could be fatally divisive for the movement?

Koide: Those roots are that strong when you talk about war responsibility. But as I have mentioned to you, I feel at the bottom of my heart that each and every individual must take personal responsibility for how he or she lived his or her life. That's the reason why I wanted the emperor to take his responsibility as a person.

We must build such a country. Even the duped and the lied to have responsibility as individual human beings. It's true for those who lived through the war, and it's true for those who promote nuclear power in Japan today—indeed it's true for everyone on earth. Each one, should they be deceived, is responsible for being deceived.

Hirano/Kasai: Well we've gone on long today and heard some really important things. Thank you very much.

Recommended citation: *Katsuya Hirano and Hirotaka Kasai interview Koide Hiroaki, "The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster is a Serious Crime", The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 14, Issue 6, No. 1, March 15, 2016.*

Notes

1

Koide Hiroaki, "The Truth About Nuclear Power: Japanese Nuclear Engineer Calls for Abolition," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol 9, Issue 31 No 5, August 1, 2011.

2

Translator's note: There is also a significant amount Cs-134 (although now perhaps 20% of Cs-137 totals). Large amounts of Cs have flowed into the ocean as well. Cs-134 is the

main tracer for following Fukushima effluents in the ocean. I am indebted to Timothy Mousseau for this insight.

3

放射線管理区域 "Controlled area means an area, outside of a restricted area but inside the site boundary, access to which can be limited by the licensee for any reason."

4

See the English translation of his testimony at the Diet: Koide Hiroaki, "The Truth About Nuclear Power: Japanese Nuclear Engineer Calls for Abolition" *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol 9, Issue 31 No 5, August 1, 2011.

5

"Tanemaki Journal," an Osaka based radio show by Mainichi Broadcasting Station, began to air critical evaluations of the Fukushima incident immediately after March 11th. Tanemaki Journal invited Koide as a commentator on a daily basis and he offered astute and up-to-date comments on the disaster. Despite, or perhaps because of, its popularity, according to some reports, the radio program was shut down in July 2012 under pressure from Kansai Electric Power Company which was a major sponsor of the TV station MBS. When Mainichi announced the termination of Tanemaki, listeners protested outside the company's office. The program won a Sakata Memorial Journalism Award in March 2012.

6

Kariya Tetsu, *Oi Shinbo 111 Fukushima no shinjitsu* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2014). The episode was published in April 28th, 2014 in a popular comic book. After returning from their visit to Fukushima, Protagonist and his father began to feel very dull and experienced nosebleeds. The episode developed into a social and political issue as it came under attack by conservative politicians and media for stirring up "damage by rumor."

7

Oi Shinbo discusses the theory that nosebleeds may be the result of ionizing radiation that converts H₂O in the nasal passages to the hydroxyl radical HO which can then form hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂), see Kariya, *Oi Shinbo*, 111: 240-48.

8

Kyushu Electric Power Co. (KEPCO) reactivated the No. 1 reactor in August 2015 and No. 2 in October in the same year. Abe Shinzō's government expressed confidence in the safety the restart by calling the new safety measure "the world toughest." According to the Japan Times, the government plans to have nuclear power account for 20 to 22 percent of the country's total electricity supply by 2030, compared with roughly 30 percent before the disaster at the Fukushima complex. The government continues with the policy despite the overwhelming public opposition against the reactivation of the reactors and the clear evidence that Japanese economy is sustainable without nuclear energy.

9

Mutō Ruiko and Fukushima residents filed a lawsuit against TEPCO and the Japanese government officials, seeking criminal responsibility for the Fukushima nuclear accident. Muto's interview will be published in the Asia-Pacific Journal this year.

10

In September 2015, TEPCO released its first 850 tons of filtered radioactive groundwater into the sea. This is a part of TEPCO's "subdrain plan" that was approved in late July,

2015, after a year-long battle with local fishermen who opposed the release fearing that it would pollute the ocean and contaminate the marine life. 300 tons of contaminated water is being generated at the plant daily. TEPCO has yet to deal with remaining 680,000 tons of highly contaminated water that was used to cool the reactors during the 2011 meltdown.

11

Kashiwazaki is a city in Niigata prefecture.

12

The Tokaimura nuclear accident occurred on September 30th 1999, resulting in two deaths. It was the worst civilian nuclear radiation accident in Japan prior to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster of 2011. The criticality accident happened in a uranium processing facility operated by JCO, a subsidiary of Sumitomo Metal Mining Co. in the village of Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture. Both the national and the prefectural governments failed to deal promptly with the accident due to the lack of evacuation plan and Tatsuya Murakai, then the mayor of the Tokaimura, decided to evacuate villagers from the affected area. 27 workers, who contained the crisis, were exposed to radioactivity.

13

Tanaka Shōzō (1841-1913) is considered to be Japan's first environmentalist. Tanaka is well known for his activism in connection with pollution caused by waste from the Ashio Copper Mine in Tochigi prefecture. From the mid-1880s, the Watarase river near the mine became heavily contaminated by mine waste and in 1890 a large flood carried poisonous waste from the mine into surrounding fields and villages. Tanaka took the cause to the National Diet as a member of the House of Representatives, but it ended with little success. In 1900, Tanaka and villagers in the valley of the Watarase river planned a mass protest in Tokyo, but were stopped and dispersed by government troops. He resigned from the Diet in 1901 and made a direct appeal to Emperor Meiji. He became the supporter of local autonomy and developed his own anti-war, anti-imperialist, and environmental philosophy. He died of cancer in Yanaka village in 1913.

Japan's Nuclear Map and Epicenter of the Earthquakes of 3.11

Contaminated Water Tanks

Decontamination Workers

Bags containing contaminated soil. This apocalyptic scene extends infinitely in the villages near the Fukushima dai-ichi

The Hosokawa family of Iitate Village continues to live in the heavily radiated area to look after their horses (2014). More than a dozen horses died since 2011.

“The Fukushima Nuclear Disaster is a Serious Crime”: Interview with Koide Hiroaki 福島核災害は明らかに深刻な犯罪である—小出裕章氏に聞く

Katsuya Hirano **and** Hirotaka Kasai

Japan's Nuclear Map and Epicenter of the Earthquakes of 3.11

Contaminated Water Tanks

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Bags containing contaminated soil. This apocalyptic scene extends infinitely in the villages near the Fukushima dai-ichi

The Hosokawa family of Iitate Village continues to live in the heavily radiated area to look after their horses (2014). More than a dozen horses died since 2011.

<http://apjjf.org/2016/06/Hirano.html>

Translation by Robert Stolz

Transcription by Akiko Anson

Introduction

Koide Hiroaki (66) has emerged as an influential voice and a central figure in the anti-nuclear movement since the nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi of March 11, 2011. He spent his entire career as a nuclear engineer working towards the abolition of nuclear power plants. His powerful critique of the "nuclear village" and active involvement in anti-nuclear movements "earned him an honorable form of purgatory as a permanent assistant professor at Kyoto University."¹ Koide retired from Kyoto University in the spring of 2015, but continues to write and act as an important voice of conscience for many who share his vision of the future free from nuclear energy and weapons. He has authored 20 books on the subject. Professor Kasai Hirotaka and I visited his office at Kyoto University's Research Reactor Institute in Kumatori, Osaka, on December 26th, 2014 for this interview. We believe that the contents of the interview, which offer new information about the degree of radioactive contamination and invaluable insight into Koide's ethical and political stance as a scientist, remain crucial for our critical reflection on ecological destruction, the violation of human rights, and individual responsibility. Professor Robert Stolz, the translator of this interview and the author of *Bad Water* (Duke University Press, 2015), provides a historical perspective on the interview in a separate article. KH

Interview

The Fukushima Disaster and Government and Corporate Response

Hirano: How does the Fukushima accident compare with the bombing of Hiroshima or Chernobyl in its scale? What are the possible effects of this yet unknown exposure?

Koide: Let's start with the scale of the accident: It was a core meltdown involving the release of various kinds of radioactive material. Radioactive noble gas isotopes were also released, as were iodine, cesium, strontium, and other radioactive material. The noble gas isotopes have a short half-life and so at this stage they are all gone. Iodine, too, is gone. So now four years since the accident the materials that are still a problem are cesium-137, strontium-90, and tritium; really, it's these three.²

Now, as for the scale of the accident, I think it would be best to compare these three radionuclides. Today the main contamination of Japanese soil is the radionuclide cesium-137 [Cs-137 or ¹³⁷Cs]. The ocean is largely contaminated with strontium-90 [Sr-90 or ⁹⁰Sr] and tritium [T or ³H]. Right now the main culprit adding to the exposure of the people in Japan is Cs-137, so I think it's best to use Cs-137 as a standard for measuring the scale of the accident.

But we simply don't know with any precision how much Cs-137 was released. That's because **all the measuring equipment was destroyed at the time of the accident**. How much Cs-137 was released into the air?

How much was spilled in the sea? We just don't know.

Still, the Japanese government has reported estimates to the IAEA

[International Atomic Energy Agency]. According to those estimated levels, reactors 1, 2, and 3 had been in operation on March 11, 2011, and all three suffered meltdowns. Those three reactors released 1.5×10^{16} Becquerels of Cs-137, which would make it a release of 168 times more radioactive material than the Hiroshima bombing. And this is only material released into the atmosphere—at least according to Japanese government estimates. But I myself think the government's numbers are an underestimate. Various experts and institutes from around the world have offered several of their own estimates. There are those that are lower than the Japanese government's numbers and those that are higher, some two or three times higher than the government's numbers. According to these other estimates I think that the release of Cs-137 into the atmosphere could be around 500 times the Hiroshima bombing.

Now for what has been washed into the sea. That number is likely not much different from the levels released into the atmosphere. Even today we are unable to prevent this release. And so if we combine the amount of Cs-137 released in the air and the ocean together, we get an estimate several hundred times the Hiroshima levels. And some estimates suggest the Fukushima accident could be as much as one-thousand Hiroshimas.

Now to compare this with other accidents: The amount released into the atmosphere from the explosion during the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant was 800 to 1000 times the Hiroshima levels. Put simply, these estimates place Fukushima on par with Chernobyl.

Worse than any of these, however, is atmospheric testing. From the 1950s to the 1960s atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons had already released Cs-137 into the air more than sixty times the numbers released even by the Japanese government for Fukushima. Of course Fukushima is an incredible tragedy, but considered from the earth as a whole it is a rather small accident.

Hirano: I want to ask in more detail about the effect of Cs-137 on the human body and the environment.

Koide: Cesium is an alkaline metal. From the human body's perspective, cesium closely resembles potassium. The body contains enormous amounts of potassium. It is essential for humans. It's everywhere in our bodies. Especially our flesh and muscles are full of potassium. And because of this, when cesium is released into the environment, the body deals with cesium as it does with the alkaline metal potassium, which is to say that it is taken into the body and accumulates there.

Strontium is an earth metal. The body treats it like calcium. As you know calcium is a human body building block that accumulates in our bones. Strontium, too, is taken into and collects in the bones. Just as cesium is

taken in and is transported to the flesh and muscle.

Hirano: Comparing the releases from nuclear tests by the US and the USSR during the Cold War period, you said that the Fukushima accident was small. So in what way should we think about Fukushima: is it best to consider it a Japanese problem, or to consider it from a global perspective?

Koide: The amount of products of nuclear fission released during atmospheric testing was enormous, and these particles continue to expose humans to radiation. I'm a bit older than you and I recall in my childhood being told not to let the rain fall on me at the time of the testing. In this way everyone on earth has been exposed (*hibaku*/ 被曝). And because of this testing, historically speaking, cancer rates have slowly risen; I believe this increase in cancer is due to the exposure suffered during the atmospheric testing. Now the radioactive material released from Fukushima has been dispersed across the globe and so once again everyone on earth has been exposed to additional radiation. I think we can expect cancer rates to rise once again.

Atmospheric nuclear testing released all of the radioactive material in the explosions, which entered the stratosphere. Between the stratosphere and the troposphere there is the tropopause, and every year come spring all that material dispersed in the stratosphere breaks through the tropopause and falls to earth. So that material, though initially dispersed in the stratosphere, eventually falls to earth evenly, everywhere. Actually, it might not be accurate to say that it falls evenly on the earth. The majority of the testing was done in the temperate regions of the northern hemisphere, such as Nevada and the Semipalatinsk test site [in Kazakhstan], so that the northern hemisphere—as the site of most of the testing—is heavily contaminated, and within that the temperate region is heavily contaminated. Still, I can say the atmospheric testing overall has caused global contamination.

My focus now is to figure out how to deal with the acute and heavy contamination from Fukushima. I know something needs to be done right there in that specific place. That contamination will disperse and be diffused across the globe. Once dispersed, the amount of radioactive material from Fukushima will be small when compared with the atmospheric testing. Which is not to say it is not harmful. An increase in cancer will be the result. I mention that for humanity as a whole; the atmospheric tests were worse.

Now, strontium-90 [Sr-90] has been leaking from Fukushima into the ocean, so it will eventually reach the United States, especially the west coast. This much we are sure of. But to answer your question, the amount of dispersed cesium and strontium released by the atmospheric tests is tens of times greater than the Fukushima levels. Because the west coast of the US is already contaminated from the atmospheric testing, though the dispersed contamination from Fukushima will reach US shores, for people living on the US west coast, the Fukushima accident—and this is perhaps

awful to say—contamination from Fukushima is hardly worth considering. Historically a much greater event has already taken place.

Hirano: To put that another way, the current Fukushima accident gives us a chance to reconsider the enormity of the past contamination from US and Soviet atmospheric tests, which has not been openly discussed.

Koide: Yes, that's exactly right. In fact, it is the masses of people who need to realize the impact of the contamination on them. In the case of the Fukushima disaster, for example, they need to be aware that some radioactive material is reaching the North American coast, and the prevailing westerly winds will carry anything released into the atmosphere to the US. Those earlier numbers from the Japanese government indicate that the levels for Cs-137 in the atmosphere are 168 times those of the Hiroshima bombing. I've been told that level is 1.5×10^{16} Becquerels [Bq]. These exponents can be a pain to process, so if we think of it in peta-units—which is 10^{15} —we get essentially 15 petabecquerels [PBq].

That said, while we are not really sure this is the number, we do know that a portion of this material will ride the prevailing winds across the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, closer to the ground, the winds will be east, south, and north, and therefore this other portion will fall on Japan—and we can investigate the actual levels here: how much fell on this town, on this prefecture? Adding these up, it seems to be only 2.4 PBq. Which is to say of the total fifteen PBq, 2.4, or roughly only 16%, fell on Japanese soil. If the totals are higher, still a smaller share of the total contamination will have fallen on Japan compared with the Pacific, with the largest portion falling on the west coast of the United States.

So why don't we hear complaints from the US? Why are there no calls for compensation? Whenever someone asks me this, I simply say that there just aren't any such complaints. Why is this so? Well the levels released by the US during the atmospheric testing were tens of times greater than Fukushima. They are the criminals, so they cannot ask for compensation from Japan. The U.S. government does not want to have to reflect on its own past, and I think they are eager to completely avoid bringing up anything like that conversation. That is why I believe it is so important that those who have been exposed to radioactive contamination realize what atmospheric testing has done to them.

Kasai: I'd like to get back to the moment of the accident in some detail. On March 11, 2011 we had the East Japan Disaster (meaning the earthquake and tsunami off Tohoku). You've already talked about the string of accidents at the nuclear plant. At the moment the accident was taking place, you were following the response by the Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) in real time. What did you see in those initial moments?

Japan's Nuclear Map and Epicenter of

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Koide: It was truly a disastrous response. On the 11th I was in the laboratory in Kyoto as March was my month to work in the radiation-controlled area.³ It was normal workday hours and various tasks kept me busy working within the controlled area. Of course there is no TV or anything like that in the work space. That night there was a meeting so I came out to attend and that's when I saw the images of the Sendai airport being swept away by the tsunami. The report said that there had been a devastating earthquake and tsunami. Then I wondered about the safety of the nuclear plants.

Right then, there really was no more information. We had scheduled a nuclear safety issues seminar for the 18th. I've participated in hundreds of these seminars. Participants from the Ukraine had just arrived on the 11th. We promised to go out drinking after they arrived and so that night I went out. There was no more TV, and while there was a vague unease among us, that's how we spent the time.

The next day I learned that all power at Fukushima had been lost and I knew things were not going to be simple. Then at noon on the 12th the roof of reactor one was blown off; at that point any expert must have known there had been a reactor meltdown. So I was certain of a core meltdown and because once it has gone this far, there is no going back, it was time to call for anyone who could evacuate to do so. I thought we were at that stage on the 12th.

Yet neither the government nor TEPCO said a single word about a core meltdown; they announced that the incident merited a 3 or 4 on the International Nuclear Event Scale. I remember thinking "You've got to be kidding! There's already been a meltdown. This is at least a level 6 or 7." But neither the government nor TEPCO gave any indication of this and there was no word of it in the media either.

One by one there were explosions at reactors 3, 4, and 2. As an expert in nuclear power, I understood there was absolutely nothing that could be done. I thought people needed to be evacuating, but still the Japanese government didn't make the call. Government officials had set up at an off-site center near a power plant in Fukushima—at first they announced evacuation inside two kilometers, then that expanded to three, five, ten, and finally twenty km. After that nothing was done. The offsite center was supposed to coordinate the emergency response in the event of an accident, but it turned out that every one of the officials fled. They left the employees behind and fled. The Japanese government's response was indescribably cruel.

Kasai: It seems the very words "meltdown" (メルtdown) and "core meltdown" (*roshin yōyū*/炉心熔融) were strictly forbidden.

Koide: Exactly.

Kasai: I was in Japan watching on TV. What shocked me was all the nuclear power experts explaining the incident in the studio. I suppose it was a satellite relay, but when reactor number three exploded on our screens they were giving their analyses of the explosion in real time. There were experts on TV saying that the reactor had a blast valve that was used successfully. Even hearing that, an average viewer might think something was amiss. But having physicists, experts on radiation, on TV saying these things, well, even the average viewer wouldn't buy that explanation. In a broad sense, nuclear experts like yourself played several roles in the media and government.

Koide: Yes, that's clearly true for pronuclear experts. They all tended to tell a story that underestimated the accident. Immediately after the accident public announcements and information were restricted. As a result individual opinions or statements were strictly forbidden and nearly all experts remained silent, so even basic information was not broadcast. Though I'd made statements from the nuclear lab beginning on the 12th, it is likely there were instructions from the Ministry of Science and Education to silence me. The head of the lab convened several meetings where he told each of us not to make any statement, that the lab would toe the official line when dealing with the mass media. I thought this was wrong and said that anyone who was asked a question by the media should answer it, further saying that if I were asked a question, I had a responsibility to answer. Since then I've continued to make statements in the media. Still the large majority of nuclear researchers were not able to do this.

As a result it was the pronuclear researchers who monopolized the interpretations - exactly. So as they went to the TV studios I think each was told: "Today, it's your turn to go to the studio." I think that's how they played their part and handled the media.

Kasai: With respect to controlling information, would you say your experience with the head of the nuclear lab shows how the professional organizations exert pressure on the universities?

Koide: Yes, I would. The head of the lab opened a conference with all the other laboratories—even I went. There he said that any statements to the media should be on message and come only from the information office.

Kasai: So pressure came from academic conferences.

Koide: Yes, there was pressure coming from the academic conference side as well. Take for example something like a conference on nuclear power. From the very start it was never a real discussion; it was a meeting of powerful and vocal spokesmen for the nuclear community or village (*genshiryoku kyōdōtai*/原子力共同体 or *genshiryoku mura*/原子力村), which is to say the group of pronuclear government officials and private companies mainly centered around the LDP and Toshiba, Hitachi, Mitsubishi, and other pronuclear manufacturers of power plants—and of course their supporters in the media. Thus as an organization the

conference was predisposed to underestimate the accident and to then promote that underestimation.

Hirano: Immediately after the accident you testified in the Diet presenting data indicating the seriousness of the disaster and demanding that the government terminate the operation of all the power plants.⁴

Koide: I did.

Hirano: After that it seems you weren't again asked to speak publicly, or given the opportunity to offer more detailed thoughts on the situation.

Koide: By "speak publicly" you mean in the Diet or in some other official government setting?

Hirano: Yes, and also in the media.

Koide: With respect to the media, I've never really had any confidence in them. Since the accident, I've been overwhelmingly busy and haven't accepted a single invitation from TV stations.

Hirano: I see. So there were invitations.

Koide: There have been many calls saying, "come down to the studio." But I always tell them that I am too busy for this sort of thing. I'd say, if you come to my office, we could meet. Many did come by, even back then. But as everyone knows, in television you might talk for an hour and none of it makes it on air, or if it does, it's maybe thirty seconds.

Hirano: Right, and only the convenient parts.

Koide: That's it and there's really nothing that can be done about it. There was, however, one outlet for which I was extremely grateful: the daily radio program called Tanemaki Journal (種まきジャーナル).⁵ There I could go on every day and offer my thoughts live. I wish it could have continued, but it was completely and totally smashed. What a world we live.

Kasai: So, on the subject of standards used for assessing the danger posed by radiation for the human body and the environment: What are your thoughts on how the government deals with this issue?

Koide: They are absolutely not dealing with it at all. I think you already know this but in Japan the average person is not supposed to be exposed to more than one milliSievert per year—that's set by law. Why is that the level decided on? Because exposure to radiation is dangerous. If exposure weren't dangerous, if low levels of exposure were safe, there'd be no problem even without that legal limit. But exposure to radiation is dangerous—this is the conclusion of all research. So every nation in the world has set legal limits for exposure.

For people like me who get paid to work with radiation, it's not really possible to observe the 1mSv/yr limit [1mSv/yr]. We're told that in exchange for our salaries, we accept exposure to twenty milliSieverts a year. That's the standard I work under in my job. But the current Japanese government has now stated that if contamination is under 20mSv/yr somewhere, that place is safe to return to—safe to return to even for children. This is way beyond common sense.

Hirano: What is the basis of this claim? Why would the government

announce these numbers and forcefully declare these areas safe to return to? What's the basis for the government's numbers?

Koide: The basis for those numbers...for example the government says that organizations like the IAEA or the ICRP [International Commission on Radiological Protection] suggest that in emergencies during which the 1mSv/yr standard cannot be maintained standards should be set between twenty and 100mSv/yr. The government seizes on this and declares that since the IAEA and the ICRP have said this, that 20mSv/yr is therefore a safe level—usually adding that membership in both the IAEA and the ICRP is voluntary anyway. But because these organizations have said this is no reason to break Japanese law. If Japan is a nation governed by the rule of law at all, surely this means that the very people who make the laws should also follow them—that should be obvious. But these guys have declared 20mSv/yr safe even for children. There is absolutely no way I can consent to this.

Hirano: So there is no scientific basis for these levels.

Koide: Well... the danger corresponds to the amount of exposure—you probably know this—so for a country that has declared its intention to maintain the 1mSv/yr standard to then turn around and ask people to endure twenty times that level, there is no scientific basis for that declaration. That's a social decision.

But if you want to inquire as to why, as I've mentioned to you, some 2.4 petabecquerels of radioactive material have fallen on Japan, that material has been dispersed, contaminating Tohoku, Kanto, and western Japan. So in addition to the law setting the legal limit for exposure at 1mSv/yr, there is another law that states that absolutely nothing may be removed from a radioactive management area in which the levels exceed 40,000 Becquerels per square meter.

So the question becomes how many places or how much area has been contaminated beyond 40,000 Bq/m²? And according to the investigations, that answer is 140,000 km². The entirety of Fukushima prefecture has been contaminated to where all of it must be declared a radioactivity management area. Indeed, while centered on Fukushima, parts of Chiba and Tokyo have also been contaminated. The number of people living in what must be called a radiation-controlled area is in the millions, and could exceed ten million.

For me, if Japan is in fact a nation governed by the rule of law, I believe the government has the responsibility to evacuate these entire communities. Instead of taking a proper action to secure people's livelihood, the government decided to leave them exposed to the real danger of radiation. In my view, Fukushima should be declared uninhabitable and the government and TEPCO should bear a legal responsibility for the people displaced and dispossessed by the nuclear disaster. That's what I think, but if that were to be done, it would likely bankrupt the country. I think that even though it could bankrupt Japan, the government should have carried

out the evacuation to set an example of what the government is supposed to do. But obviously those in and around the LDP certainly didn't agree. They've decided to sacrifice people and get by taking on as little burden as possible. So they've made the social decision to force people to endure their exposure. In my view, this is a serious crime committed by Japan's ruling elite.

I would like people to know just how many thousands of people live in this abnormal situation where even nuclear scientists like me are not allowed to enter, not to mention, drink the water. It is strange that this issue has been left out of all debate over the effects of the radioactive exposure. We must be aware that contemporary Japan continues to operate outside the law in abandoning these people to their fate by saying it's an extraordinary situation. Under such circumstances, I think, there are a multitude of symptoms of illnesses in contaminated areas. But if we're talking about any given symptom, it's hard to say since we just don't have any good epidemiological studies, or even any good data. But there will surely be symptoms, namely cancer and leukemia.

However little exposure to radiation is, it causes cancer and leukemia—this is the conclusion of all current science. These symptoms are said to become visible 5 years after the initial exposure. But because radiation is not the sole cause of cancer or leukemia establishing a direct causal relationship is extremely difficult. For this very reason we need to continue to investigate the state of exposure by conducting rigorous epidemiological studies. But this government wishes instead to hide the damage so I'm afraid no such study is on the horizon. In addition, I have heard about many cases of nose bleeding, severe headaches, and extreme exhaustion. And I am truly concerned about small children and young people living in Fukushima as they are most vulnerable to exposure.

Hirano: So what is your view of the actual damages of radiation exposure on human health?

Koide: On the evening of the Fukushima dai-ichi reactor accident of March 11, 2011, a Radiation Emergency Declaration was announced. The Declaration suspended existing Japanese law concerning exposure to radiation. Though Japanese law sets the limit for exposure for the general population at one milliSievert a year [1mSv/yr], the new permissible level would be 20 mSv/yr. That Emergency Declaration is still in effect. It is common knowledge that even low levels of exposure are dangerous. Including even infants in this newly imposed 20mSv/yr standard will obviously lead to various diseases. Further, because the monitoring equipment was destroyed at the time of the accident we do not have accurate data on the exposure levels of the residents. Numerous cases of thyroid cancer have been found. The prevalence of thyroid cancer is dozens of times that of normal incidence. Pro-nuclear groups say those numbers are the result of the screening process itself, not the effect of radiation exposure. Which is to say that this was the first major screening of that

population and so it was natural that many cases of thyroid cancer would be found. Put differently, what they are saying is that they have never conducted a thorough study of radiation exposure and its impact on human health. Science should acknowledge what it already knows and what it does not. If it is true that there is no established scientific data, a properly scientific approach would be to carry out a thorough investigation. To deny the damage to health by exposure to radiation without such an investigation is absolutely at odds with the scientific spirit. Prof. Tsuda at Okayama University has already conducted a detailed study on the outbreak of thyroid cancer, showing an epidemiological-like outbreak. Just as happened at Chernobyl, as time passes it is clear there will be more and more instances of all kinds of illnesses.

Hirano: In your books you've often stated that there is no uncontaminated food. But for most Japanese, such basic knowledge seems limited to food from Fukushima, and nearby parts of Ibaraki, Gumma, Chiba, Miyagi. For food produced outside these areas, do you think it's necessary to have strict testing of food that is sold and consumed? What is to be done? Do you think food from outside these areas should also be subject to strict testing before being sent to market and consumed?

Koide: Right, as we discussed earlier, before the Fukushima accident the entire globe was already contaminated with radiation. This means that Tohoku or Kanto or Kansai food, all of it, has been contaminated with radiation—radiation from atmospheric tests. Beyond this, contamination from the 1986 Chernobyl accident reached Japan on the prevailing westerly winds, meaning that all Japanese food was contaminated. And on top of all this, with the Fukushima disaster, as I mentioned, it is not that a thick layer of contamination has dispersed to every corner of the globe from Fukushima, but that this thick layer of contamination is right now centered on Fukushima.

So if we were to carefully measure the levels of food contamination, we'd more or less find moving out from the highest levels in Fukushima to say western Japan or Kyushu, that the numbers would gradually decline to the lower levels received from the atmospheric tests. Right now the people of Fukushima have been abandoned in the areas of the highest levels of radiation. And abandoned people have to find a way to live. Farmers produce agricultural goods, dairy farmers produce dairy products, and ranchers produce meat; these people must do so in order to live. They are not the ones to be blamed at all.

As the Japanese state is absolutely unreliable in this matter, these people have no choice but to go on producing food in that place, all the while suffering further exposure. So I don't think we can throw out the food they produce there under those conditions. Inevitably someone has to consume that food—I suggest it be fed to the pronuclear lobby (laughs). We should serve all of the most heavily contaminated food at say the employee cafeteria at TEPCO or in the cafeteria for Diet members in the Diet building.

But that isn't nearly enough. We must carefully inspect the food, and once we've determined what foods have what levels of contamination, once that is fully measured and delineated, then those who have the corresponding levels of responsibility should eat it, should be given it.

Now of course strict levels of responsibility cannot really be allotted one by one to individuals that way, so when it comes to this food, I would propose devising a "60 and over" system. The most contaminated foods could only be eaten by those 60 years old and older, and from there also have food for "50 and over," "40 and over," "30 and over" - giving the best food to children. For example, school lunches would get the most uncontaminated food available—there'd still be contamination from the atmospheric tests—but food with only those levels would be given to children and only adults would receive the contaminated food. That would be my proposal. My proposal would first be a precise measurement, starting from Fukushima and then of course including western Japan and Kyushu, to sort out the levels and then determine the relative burdens. I am aware that this is a controversial proposal, but each one of us, especially those who built postwar Japan, bears responsibility for allowing our society to heavily dependent on nuclear energy without carefully reflecting on the risks and consequences of it. And more importantly, we have the responsibility for protecting children.

Kasai: Recently, that idea has been suggested in Nishio Masamichi's *Radioactive Archipelago* (*Hibaku retto*/『被ばく列島』). You've just stressed that though the first step must be a rigorous measurement, right now that is simply impossible.

Koide: Right, completely impossible.

Kasai: So, that's true of water as well. First I don't think most people know how to measure the levels in water. You've already said how the current minimum standards are worthless, that below a certain threshold it would be displayed as "ND" (Not Detectable). For example, for tap water, up to 20 Becquerels would be posted as "ND," exactly as if there was no radiation detected at all. Yet even with all these doubts on measurement, we must start with it, though it's a dizzyingly long road ahead. But what do you think can be done to change this situation for the better?

Koide: Right now Japan has a standard of 100Bq/kg for general foodstuffs. Before the Fukushima disaster, Japanese foodstuffs were contaminated—by the atmospheric tests—at a level of 0.1Bq/kg. Of course there were some foods with less contamination and some with more. Still, roughly speaking it was 0.1Bq/kg. So when you're talking 100 Bq/kg that's allowing 1,000 times the [pre-Fukushima] levels.

As I said before, any exposure is absolutely dangerous. And the dangers increase corresponding to an increase in levels of exposure; this is the conclusion of all research. 100 Bq/kg is dangerous, 99 is dangerous, as is 90, and 50, and 10—they are all dangerous. 10 Bq/kg is 100 times the pre-Fukushima levels.

So I think it's necessary to precisely measure the levels of contamination. As many people are living in a state of anxiety, groups like consumers' cooperatives and other sorts of organizations are trying to measure the contamination on their own. But the measuring devices that these groups are able to get, such as the ones called NAI, these devices can only measure levels above 20Bq/kg. While this means that they can measure levels as little as one-fifth of the national thresholds, from my perspective even this lower level is far too high.

And the worst thing that could happen is thinking that any contamination below the detectable limits of these machines, meaning below 20Bq/kg, would be misunderstood as being free of contamination, and then having the Fukushima prefectural government actively using this data as good news: "measurements below the detectable limits of the device must be clean; we can even serve this food in school cafeterias," or PR campaigns announcing "Fukushima produce is safe." Of course it would be totally outrageous and unthinkable and yes I think every effort should be made to serve the least contaminated food in school cafeterias—but the reality is that any food tested below detectable levels is distributed to schools as safe produce.

I think we need to stop this situation, and technically speaking, I think several germanium semiconductor detectors must be deployed instead. But a germanium detector would cost from \$100,000 to \$200,000. And in order to use it, the detector needs to be kept at 150 degree below zero Celsius. So these are not devices that the average citizen is going to be able to use.

So no matter how dedicated any individual citizen may be, there are real limitations when it comes to measuring radiation levels. If you ask me what should be done, for example when faced with Cs-137 or Sr-90, what should be done about these contaminants? Well these contaminants were produced in a nuclear reactor at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi plant and it means that they are unmistakably TEPCO's property. And if their private property is found to have contaminated other areas they have undeniable responsibility for it. So I think this is something that is required of TEPCO. I think it is TEPCO's responsibility to precisely measure which foods have been contaminated, and to what extent, and then to report the results to the public. I think this is something the public should demand. After TEPCO the government also has responsibility—they gave their seal of approval to TEPCO after all. So the public should also demand that the government precisely measure the levels and publish the results.

Because there are limits to what one can do on one's own, I think we need a movement that forces the government and TEPCO to take responsibility for the precise measurement of the contamination.

Hirano: Some have raised doubts over precisely this kind of rigorous measurement citing possible damage caused by rumors or misinformation (*fūhyōhigai*/風評被害), but to me this sort of criticism is tainted with a sort

of "national morality" discourse (*kokumin dōtokuron*/国民道徳論).

Koide: Yes, I think so.

Hirano: There seems to be a very strong sense of dividing people into those who are seen as patriotic and those who are seen as un-Japanese (*hikokumin*/非国民).

Koide: For me, I've been making statements on the Fukushima contamination. These statements have been denounced and even made some angry with me. But the contamination is real. For a long time now I've been the kind of person who would rather hear the truth, no matter how awful, than to remain ignorant. I am absolutely not going to hide the truth; no matter how much criticism I have to take I am going to diligently report the truth. Yeah, a lot of people get angry with me. (Laughs).

Kasai: On this point, this year saw the publishing of Kariya Tetsu's manga series *Oi shinbo: Fukushima no shinjitsu* (『美味しんぼ – 福島の実』).⁶ It would seem a kind of political campaign was developed to attack it. What is your take on this?

Koide: The editors sent me a copy and I've read it. It's an awesome manga. In this day and age we just don't have this kind of detailed manga on this problem and I am grateful for it. And more, *Oi shinbo* talks about the nosebleeds [caused by radiation]. The nosebleeds are real. Lots of Fukushima residents are said to be suffering from nosebleeds. Itokawa, the mayor of Futaba machi, has shown us proof. One of my acquaintances often talks about the nosebleeds.

It was true at Chernobyl, too. But nosebleeds have not been definitively and scientifically linked to exposure to radiation.⁷ Still there is no denying that it is real and happening. So even if current science is unable to explain it, it's for science to ask just what is going on? Science has a duty to explain this, to tell the truth without obfuscation. No matter the reasons, we should be allowed to tell the truth. So for me I don't think there is anything wrong with this part of *Oi shinbo*.

Kasai: I think *Oi shinbo* clearly exposed the politically constructed narratives "damage from rumor or misinformation" and "emotional bonds" (*kizuna*/絆) as fictions, and so for this reason it appears it had to be crushed.

Koide: Exactly. But Kariya, the author of *Oi shinbo*, is not one of the criminals responsible for the Fukushima disaster. Rather the government officials who caused the Fukushima disaster are the criminals. Yet it is these same government bureaucrats who now come out and complain that this manga is out of order. I say, "No, it's you who are out of order. We need to send you to prison right now."

But isn't it always the case that a criminal who has committed a crime remains unquestioned and so starts bashing those who are telling the truth? When that happens I think the problem is precisely this word you just used "emotional bonds." Since Fukushima, I have come to hate this word. (Laughs).

Hirano: "Bonds" seems to be the new nationalism, doesn't it?

Koide: Yes, yes it does.

Hirano: You've often said that the Japanese economy and the people's lifestyle would be fine even without a single nuclear power plant. In fact, since the government shut all the nuclear reactors down, the people have experienced no real trouble at all. In addition, considered in light of world standards we still have material riches and a lifestyle of surplus. Given this, what are your thoughts on the call to restart the reactors? For what purpose, what reason do you think the government has?⁸

Koide: First of all, the power companies don't want to go bankrupt. In other words, the heads of the power companies do not want to take personal responsibility. For example, if the reactors are restarted and there's an accident, are the heads of the power companies going to be punished? We already know that they will not be. Even after the Fukushima disaster neither the chairman, nor the CEO, nor anyone below—not a single person—was punished.⁹ It certainly looks as if the reactors are restarted and there's an accident, the heads of the power companies would not be required to take any responsibility. The heads of the power companies, from Kyushu Electric to Kansai Electric, have received this message loud and clear.

What's more, if the nuclear power plants are idled and not allowed to restart, then all the capital they represent becomes a non-performing asset. And of course this is anathema to anyone in management.

Hirano: If we could return to a technical discussion specifically how to decommission a reactor. As have others in your field you've already stated that a full end game cannot be envisioned yet. Still could you talk about what makes this issue so difficult?

Koide: By decommissioning you mean the endpoint of the Fukushima reactors?

Hirano: Yes, what does it mean for Fukushima dai-ichi?

Koide: When we say decommission we basically mean: How do we fully contain the radiation? At least I think that's the main point. Now this is impossible if we don't know the status of the melted core. Though it's been four years since the disaster we simply do not know where the core is or in what state it is.

This is a situation that only happens in nuclear accidents. However large a chemical plant explosion may be there'd probably be an initial fire, but usually after several days, perhaps weeks you'd still be able to go on site and investigate. You'd be able to see just how things broke down. And in some situations might even be able to fix them. But with an accident at a nuclear plant you cannot even go on site four years later—probably not even ten years later.

Hirano: Because the contamination is so severe that no one can come close to it.

Koide: Yes. For humans going there means instant death, so the only way at

all is to use robots. But robots are extremely vulnerable to radiation. Consider, robots receive their instructions through series of 1s and 0s, so should the radiation switch a 0 to a 1 you'd end up with completely different instructions. Essentially robots are useless. Even if you are able to send them in they can never return. Because this has been the case up to now, the only way left in the end might be to use robots that try to avoid exposure or that are built as much as possible to withstand exposure, but that is no simple thing.

So it means until we figure out what to do it would still take many years. Once you understand this fact you can start thinking about what can be done. And at the very least the "road map" devised by the government and TEPCO is the most absolutely optimistic road map that there could be. They are convinced that the melted core fell through the bottom of the pressure vessel and now lie at the bottom of the containment vessel—basically piling up like nuggets of the melted core. There's no way this would be the case. (Laughs).

As the severity of the disaster became clear, water was repeatedly thrown on the reactors. This water would evaporate and dissipate continuously. That was the actual situation. There is no way that the melted core would have stayed as slimy liquid and then piled up like so many little nuggets. It should have been scattered all over the place. This is how the government and TEPCO's roadmap goes: The buns would stay at the bottom of the containment vessel, above which is the reactor pressure vessel—a steel pressure furnace. With the furnace floor broken open, there is a hollow at the bottom through which the melted core must have leaked.

So at some point both the containment vessel and the pressure vessel would be filled with water and they'll be able to see the nuggets of melted core by looking from above down into the water. They say the nuggets (the fallen material), yes, that they sit some thirty to forty meters below the water's surface, that they'll eventually be able to grab and remove them. This is all it takes, according to the government and TEPCO's roadmap. Not a chance. This simply cannot be done.

Hirano: Obviously we can't confirm or really say anything definitive about the situation in the reactors, but what do you think has happened?

Koide: I simply don't know. But as I have mentioned, this whole "nugget" scenario is just not the case, and so I think the materials are scattered all over the place. Though the containment vessel is made of steel, if the melted core has come in contact with that steel, just as it ate through the floor of the pressure vessel, it could possibly have melted through the containment vessel. Depending on how things developed this, too, is a possibility. Unfortunately, I simply do not know.

Hirano: If that is in fact the situation, what steps are necessary?

Koide: First, as we talked about earlier, radiation must be prevented from being released into the environment. As I consider this task as "decommissioning" or the final containment of the accident, I think in

order to prevent the release into the environment you must do whatever you can starting from the worst-case scenario.

There are situations in which the containment vessel can suffer a melt-through. I think this likely has already happened. And if it has happened what should be done? Outside the reactor there flows ground water. If the melted core were to come in contact with the ground water, the whole situation would be unmanageable. While this may have already have happened, in order to get any kind of control over the situation, some sort of barrier must be built to prevent the melted core from reaching the ground water. I've been saying this since May 2011—and they have not done a thing.

Kasai: This barrier would be an ice dam, a wall of super-chilled soil.

Koide: That's the most recent idea. But it simply cannot be done successfully. It would cost billions of dollars. And it would fail. And when it did fail they'd say there's nothing to be done but build a concrete wall. No matter how foolish an idea may be, they'll just keep moving from failure to failure.

But really, for the construction companies that's a good thing. I think Kashima would be the ones to build the super-chilled earth wall, for some billions of dollars. And if it doesn't work—they wouldn't have to take responsibility. Next they'd build an impermeable concrete wall. Several huge construction firms (*zenekon*/ゼネコン) would be contracted and would all make billions.

But considered from the perspective of actually ending the disaster, it would be a series of failures. Personally, I think an underground, impermeable wall needs to be built immediately. They are not going to be able to remove the material. All that can be done is to contain it. Underground the wall needs to be strengthened; above ground the only choice is some sort of sarcophagus like the one they built over Chernobyl. But even this would take dozens of years—I'll probably be dead by then.

Kasai: There are temporary tanks sitting on land for this water, but they are starting to leak. What should be done about this contaminated water? There's not enough space for all of it on land; it cannot be controlled; and every year the volume grows larger.

Koide: The radioactive water has penetrated the coastline around the Fukushima Daiichi. Underground water in the large area of Fukushima has been seriously contaminated. And at some point those contaminated water tanks will fail. I thought we must do everything that we possibly could. Already in March of 2011 there was some 100,000 tons of contaminated water. Even then I proposed moving it but didn't get anywhere with it. Now there's up-to 400,000 tons. In the near—meaning not too distant—future there will be nothing left but to release it into the sea.¹⁰ The water contains plutonium 239 and its release into the Ocean has both local and global impacts. A microgram of plutonium can cause death if inhaled.

Contaminated Water Tanks

Kasai: It appears that they are already moving toward that direction a little at a time aren't they.

Koide: The Nuclear Regulatory Committee has been hinting at the possibility of releasing it into the ocean.

Kasai: They have been trying to persuade the fishing cooperatives and others to allow the release.

Koide: Yes, they have.

Kasai: Something that has not been much of a topic of discussion today is decontamination. It has become a rather large industry, in other words, "the exposure industry" (*hibaku sangyō*/被曝産業). Do you think decontamination is really meaningful and effective?

Koide: Yes, I do. And we must do it. But, to say that because we've decontaminated some area that the whole issue is resolved, or that people may safely live in a decontaminated place—I think that is a real problem. First, fundamentally, people must not be forced to live in contaminated areas that must be decontaminated. First must come complete evacuation. The state must take on the responsibility to allow whole communities to evacuate. Of course, they did not do this.

Briefly, I use the word "decontamination" (*josen*/除染), which is a compound word written with the characters for "remove" and "stain." But this is something that cannot be completed when it comes to radiation, so the original sense of the word "removal of contaminants" is impossible. But as long as people are abandoned in the contaminated areas, I believe all possible actions should be taken to lessen their exposure. It is essential that the contamination be removed as far away as possible, to be transported far from where people live. For this reason I prefer to call it "[toxic] relocation" (*isen*/移染).

But even if this is done, that does not mean that the radiation has been erased. This stuff contaminates everything from mountains to what have you, it gets into the space of people's lives. When that happens it must be removed. But removal merely means moving it around—it does not mean eliminating it. It means another job is waiting to handle the contaminated materials that get moved around.

Right now the authorities say they want various prefectures and other local governments to build a temporary storage and bury the accumulated contamination there.

We talked about this before, but the contaminants themselves were clearly formerly in the reactor at TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi plant and are therefore also clearly TEPCO's property. So while it is residents who are doing the hard work of collecting all these contaminants, I think it would be

right and just for these contaminants to be returned to TEPCO. Earlier prof. Kasai told us the contaminants were being called "no-one's property" (*mushubutsu*/無主物), but I say in all seriousness, the conclusion of my logic here is to say to TEPCO: "Hey, this is your crap" and return it to them. That way the residents are not forced to accept the stuff, TEPCO is. The best solution is to return all of the material back to the Fukushima Daiichi plant, but that is not possible. Right now that place is a battlefield between poorly paid workers and the radiation, so I don't see this as a possibility.

What I would most like to do is have TEPCO's headquarters buried under all the radiation, but whenever I say this people just laugh. (laughs) I do have a second proposal. Fifteen kilometers south of Fukushima Daiichi [Fukushima 1] is the Fukushima dai-ni [Fukushima 2] nuclear plant. There is a lot of wide open space there. So first off we would return the Fukushima 1 contamination to TEPCO there. I think there would be enough space, but if there were not, the rest could be taken to TEPCO's Kashiwazaki Kariya nuclear plant. It's the world's largest nuclear plant and so there is a lot of space. I think turning that place into a nuclear waste site is a good idea.

Lately I've been invited to Kashiwazaki¹¹ and talked about it. I think I've become a hated man there. (Laughs). But I think taking full responsibility for various actions is the most important thing. And when it comes to this particular disaster no one has greater responsibility than TEPCO. As I think it important for one to take full responsibility, if Fukushima 2 doesn't work out, then Kashiwazaki Kariya is the only other option.

Hirano: State expenditures for decontamination have supposedly reached one trillion yen.

Koide: It's more than that.

Hirano: This summer I spent some time in Iitate village. Of course at the time the place was crawling with decontamination workers. It was a truly bizarre scene. I had the feeling of running around on a moonscape. Of course there were no residents there—just decontamination workers in strange gear, trucks running all over the place. Looking at that scene, being shown the actual work of decontamination, it seemed to be an excruciatingly slow—even endless—endeavor. I mean they were scrubbing everything with small brushes. I was able to ask the workers a few questions—off the record. Many were people from Hokkaido, Okinawa, and Fukushima who had lost their homes. It was a collection of modern day migrant workers and victims of disaster. They said that they work for just 15,000 yen a day.

I asked them if they thought their work was doing any good. They said they needed the money and honestly had no way of knowing if this sort of

minute and delicate work would remove the contamination. Was this a mistake? Is scrubbing everything by hand and then dumping it all in the ground really the only way to decontaminate an area?

Decontamination Workers

Koide: Well I think both that it is and it isn't effective. For example, when they first started the decontamination work, what they did was blasting everything with high-pressure water hoses. That's bad. All that does is get all the contamination moving around. It's really just dispersing it. Some of my colleagues have said that is a bad method. Be it a roof or a wall, you shouldn't just douse it with water. To really remove the contamination, you would first cover it with something that could prevent the escape of radioactivity then knock down the radiated structure, tear it all off, and then fold it up and collect it all. I think that's probably true. But it takes a long time.

I think there are effective ways of doing it and I think there are ineffective ways. Still it is fundamentally impossible to erase the contamination and so it must be moved. The only thing we should be doing is thinking about the easiest way to relocate it all.

Hirano: That's the meaning of "effective" in this situation isn't it.

Koide: Right. So the current method may be rather small in scale. But for me even small-scale methods are necessary. As long as people are living there everything is necessary.

Of course, there's legitimate criticism over the fact that this is a decontamination business and that the large construction companies are getting rich, but again, for me, as long as there are abandoned people still living there it all must be done.

Hirano: It was really a shock going there and seeing it. To see those workers and, honestly, their lack of conviction for the work. It was a really weird scene. No real enthusiasm, but rather one day after the other, contingent labor. The media has reported that the workers come from a few particular prefectures, but actually being there and talking to them, I could really get a true sense of the structure of economic inequality in Japan, that this sort of work found this kind of person, a person coming from economically precarious and socially marginalized backgrounds. In fact, you come to understand that decontamination work depends on these people.

For example, decontamination, or your preferred "relocation," couldn't those jobs be made more equitable—say by requiring TEPCO office workers, especially executives, to do it?

Koide: I've said that.

Hirano: You have? (Laughs).

Kasai: So...about the airborne radiation dosage and the soil contamination, there is a public entity that measures and publishes the airborne levels. But the soil contamination is not measured. I remember reading about Chernobyl that the soil contamination levels are the standard by which one gets the right to evacuation and refuge. But Japan only measures the air. And there are those who doubt the accuracy of the levels recorded. I thought the soil contamination had not been measured yet, but from what you mentioned earlier, we do know the extent of the contamination, don't we?

Koide: Yes, we do.

Kasai: The actual levels?

Koide: With respect to soil contamination we more or less know the extent of it. We largely know which prefectures, which towns, and which villages—as well as how badly—have been contaminated. Four years after the disaster it has moved around. Radiation moves through the environment; it has a material existence and also does die out. I'm sure much has changed since immediately following the accident.

We have the data necessary to draw a map of the situation immediately following the accident, but we don't have the data necessary to draw a map of the contamination today. That said, we basically know the extent of the soil contamination.

Kasai: Who is it that is making these measurements?

Koide: It is basically the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Some local governments took part as well. Some independent groups, as well as some local governments, took part in taking measurements back then. But for us the number one data source is the US military.

Hirano: I see; how is that?

Koide: They worked at truly amazing speed-and-accuracy.

Hirano: Sorry if this next thought seems a bit of a tangent, but right after the accident both the US and Japan were looking at the same data. But their interpretations of it were extremely far apart. The US ordered all of its personnel to evacuate an area 80 km from Fukushima. While Japan's largest evacuation zone was 20 km. Where does this disparity in evacuation zones come from? They are both looking at the same data. How do they arrive at such definitive and divergent judgments?

Koide: Well...and this was true for me, too, any nuclear specialist would have known on March 11th-March 12th at the latest-that there had been a meltdown. And this means, quite simply, that control had been lost. And once control is lost you simply don't know what is going to happen next-or that's what you must think at the time. Disaster preparedness must always

imagine the worst-case scenario. If you don't plan for the worst-case scenario it will be too late. What the US did was believe there had been a worst-case scenario—a meltdown—and so moved to take care of its people. That's why they ordered an 80 km evacuation. I think this was the correct strategy. Japan didn't do this. Japan was always thinking of the ideal, the best case scenario. They had to be thinking they could still get control and based their policy on that optimistic assumption. So they only declared a 20 km evacuation zone. I would say that from this conclusion two things may unfold: one is their desire to see this as a best-case scenario and the other is their inability to deal with it.

Hirano: What do you mean by their inability?

Bags containing contaminated soil. This apocalyptic scene extends infinitely in the villages near the Fukushima dai-ichi

Koide: In a word, the Japanese state is incapable of functioning adequately when dealing with a disaster. That's why they evacuated those within 20 km by bus but when it came to the 30 km zone they told those who could easily evacuate to do so and for all others to merely close their doors and windows.

Hirano: So there was no emergency management.

Koide: None. There simply is not a single person in the Japanese government who had thought an accident like this was possible. They all immediately fled the off-site center and so there was absolutely no emergency management—there couldn't be. And because management was now impossible, there were no announcements. Even if they had declared an 80 km evacuation zone there were no emergency shelters. They had made no preparations, so there was nothing to be done.

Hirano: Last summer I interviewed Murakami Tetsuya ¹² Just as the accident was happening he reached out to the government. But he got no response. He went to the prefecture. No response from them either. In the end he just used his own judgment. So really there was essentially zero emergency management in place. His thoughts at the time were to get the whole village to emigrate; that really there was nothing to do but to buy land and move to Hokkaido. He said these were his actual plans at the time. In fact, it would seem that the myth of safety has so totally permeated the bureaucracy that there really is no one who thinks about these things—wouldn't you say?

Koide: That's right. Not a single nuclear expert or policy maker ever seriously considered the possibility of an accident like this. I knew accidents were possible, and that when they happened the damage would be enormous; I had been commenting on the possibility, referring to some

results of simulations. But still I would have thought the kind of disaster that happened at Fukushima was some kind of impossible nightmare—yet it actually happened. It was like the worse nightmare becoming a reality. And if even I thought this then all those pronuclear people surely never gave it a moment's thought. And so when it actually happened, no one had thought about, let alone built a system to deal with it.

II The Responsibility of the Scientist and the Citizen

Kasai: In your books and lectures you often express strong respect for Tanaka Shōzō.¹³ Can you connect what you've just said to this as well?

Koide: Sure. I first became aware of Shōzō when I was in the student movement during the 1970s. This was a time when there was close attention paid to Japan's many pollution incidents, such as at Minamata. Personally I was working on nuclear power, but it was a time when, like it or not, we learned of all the harm that came along with building Japan into a modern nation. What I got from Shōzō was this epiphany that just like the Minamata disease right there before our eyes these sorts of pollution incidents went way back in Japanese history. With Japan's decision to cast off Asia and follow the West after the Meiji Ishin of 1868 came these sorts of incidents, and the question within that was just how should one live? I learned the way Shōzō lived his life. I thought: Wow, it is possible to live that way; I must do it. Unfortunately I am completely unable to do so, but I never stop thinking that Shōzō's was a wonderful way to live a life.

Hirano: Going back to an earlier discussion. You've repeatedly talked about the government's responsibility, scientists' responsibility, and individual responsibility. It would seem that this word "responsibility" is an extremely important keyword for you. You often emphasize it in your writing, too. What I want to ask concerns the issue of scientists' special responsibility, a particular social responsibility. Scientists are often thought of as technicians, but this is not really the case. As a result, I feel you've pursued an intense interrogation of yourself as a scientist. As you've said you are not going to enter politics, could you connect this discussion of scientific responsibility to your earlier discussion of doing all that has fallen to you personally to do? How should we think about these two things?

Koide: I am in science and as such I have to take on the responsibility of a scientist—Just as a politician must take political responsibility. I think I mentioned this to you the last time, but I am an absolute individualist (*tetteiteki na kojishugisha*/徹底的な個人主義者). I don't want to be constrained by anyone. I want to be able to decide my own life for myself. But because I've made this choice by myself I must also take full responsibility for that choice.

It's two sides of the same coin. I don't take orders from anyone. And this means that I alone bear the responsibility. It's really as simple as saying: I'm a scientist and so I have the responsibility of a scientist.

Hirano: On this way of thinking about responsibility: "Who is the subject

responsible?"—this way of thinking about it seems to be quite absent in contemporary Japan.

Koide: Right. People living in Japan today have not made decisions as individuals. They just "go with the flow;" as long as they follow the "authorities" whom they believe will guarantee the happiness of their individual selves. This seems true of education, too. Go to a slightly better school; get into a slightly better company; grow a bit more rich, a bit more grand. I think everyone is swept up in this current, and it's really senseless. I think it is extremely important that each and every individual live out their individuality. The absolute worst thing is for everyone to become blindly obedient to the "authorities," yet this is the Japan we find ourselves in today. And so no one takes any responsibility. Living in such a society it is too easy to say, "It can't be helped." Everyone is thus able to blame the society as a whole; "It can't be helped." And so no one takes any individual responsibility.

The most extreme and obvious example was the war. Everyone would say: "It's not my fault; I was deceived. The military were the culprits." Saying this allows people to remain at a distance, indifferent. It is bad news for a nation when its citizens have only this view of responsibility.

Hirano: You've declared, "I am an absolute individualist." Personally I am very interested in that statement. So could you speak a bit more concretely about the meaning of your individualism for how one lives a life? In other words, could you explain just what you mean by this "individualism?" That is, in Japan being individualistic is more often a way to say egotistical; a sort of disregard of others. One should pursue one's own interests—in English the word is "selfish" — egocentric — pursue your own egotistic advantage. Now this seems completely different from the way you use the term. Could you speak directly to this difference?

Koide: I think you've just done so.

Hirano: Did I? (Laughs). So that's it then, just as I said? Still it's clearly not selfishness.

Koide: No, I don't think it's about interests.

Hirano: It's about values isn't it?

Koide: Yes, it's about personal values. You and I are different people. I am different again from Mr. Kasai. Why? Well our genetic information is different. I received a bundle of information from my parents. You and Mr. Kasai, too, are influenced by your genetic information. Every one of the over one hundred million Japanese is a unique human being; and every one of the over 7.3 billion people on earth are unique individuals.

History may keep moving on, and there is a big, wide world here on this planet earth. That said, right now, at this moment, and right now, in this place, I exist as an irreplaceable being. It is nothing but an absolute truth. You normally live in Los Angeles, but right now at this moment you are a person who is here. Mr. Kasai has come down from Tokyo. While acknowledging all the implications of being within the flow of history, we

are all right here, right now.

In other words, every single individual human being has a different way of living a life; they are each unique. They have each lived a life that absolutely no one else could have lived. It is a real loss if they don't live up to their full potential. Those are my thoughts.

So for my own unique self, and so for your own unique self, and Mr. Kasai's own unique self, none of us should be compelled by someone else to do something (*meirei o sarete*/命令されて). If we don't live our lives according to the will coming from deep within ourselves, that's a real loss; we must all live with our values coming from within ourselves.

I am going to retire next March, but though I am the lowest ranked employee here— above me are assistant professors and professors — because of the peculiar arrangements of working where I do, I am not compelled to take orders from anyone. I am the lowest ranked so of course there is also no one below me to order around. So I am in a position where I never take nor give orders. For me this is the ideal position to be in.

And so I can live out my own life according to my own values; I'm allowed to live a life that suits me. Now I found myself in this position largely by accident, and then chose to continue to live my life this way. Related to this, I am a human being and so will make mistakes, but these mistakes will be things that I have chosen, things that I have personally done so there is nothing to do but to take responsibility for them. This is what I mean when I say that responsibility is an extremely important word.

Hirano: Well, you've exhaustively criticized this competitive society. You've said that this competitive society has ruined Japan and destroyed life based on what you call responsibility.

Koide: Yes. Everyone is running towards the exact same goal. It's ludicrous. You want to go that way; I want to go this way. I think this would be the ideal society. Full mutual recognition is a good thing.

Hirano: Does your view come from your personal experience? In your books you state that you were a really conscientious student when you were younger (laughs).

Koide: (laughs) Well, yes.

Hirano: You studied extremely hard. Did everything extremely hard. You continued this in your nuclear research in college believing that a new energy source was cheap and good for everyone. You must have thought this was a great thing.

Koide: That's right.

Hirano: But you eventually noticed that it was all wrong. So on this, from deep in your own experience, it's an individual history, an individual experience, in one sense it's connected to your current individualism, to how you live your life focused on the important things to you.

Koide: I think that's right. So, well, when I was young, in my late teens, I was consumed by the dream of nuclear power. I devoted my life to it. That was all a mistake—it did not take me too long to realize that.

Hirano: When did it happen? In graduate school?

Koide: My third year in university.

Hirano: Third year—so as an undergraduate.

Koide: Yes, I came to this realization in the latter half of my undergraduate studies. It was foolish and I curse myself for it, but I didn't quit. To this day I've lived my life as someone who made that wrong choice, and there is nothing to do but make amends for that choice.

At a minimum I wanted to get rid of nuclear power before there was a bad accident. I guess I've lived with this wish for over forty years—but that wish stayed out of reach. And here we have had the accident so my life has been for nothing. You could say that thing I wanted most to do has been denied. Really, what have I lived for? I think about that from time to time.

As this was my choice I have to accept it. So while the meaning of my life may have been lost, still I was able to live my own life as I pleased, without submitting to the orders of others and without ordering others around—for this I am grateful. My hopes were never realized. History is full of that kind of thing. Likely very few people see their hopes fulfilled. And while in my case they were rejected, I was able to live the life I wanted and that is a life to be grateful for.

Hirano: In a way, it's just how Tanaka Shōzō lived his life isn't it?

Koide: Yes it is. That is what I like about Shōzō.

Hirano: On that point. His life, too, was a defeat.

Koide: Complete and total defeat.

Hirano: Still, he used all sorts of means, and followed all the way through on his beliefs.

Hirano: So getting back to Fukushima, it seems when it comes to the life choices of the so-called Japanese elites, they seem caught in a system in which they will succeed and become famous by crushing their individuality and subsuming it under some organization in order to get ahead in a society and achieve fame and status. And the education system seems to be promoting this lifestyle where these sorts of people are created through intense competition. I think the very end result of this social and educational system was revealed, and it exploded in an explicit and ugly manner through various problems the Fukushima disaster has posed.

Koide: Yes, I think so. You said it.

Hirano: I see. In one sense it would have been possible even for these Japanese elites to make their personal responsibility clear and take appropriate actions only if they had lived a life based on individualism as you suggested.

Koide: Yes I think such a possibility exists, but unfortunately in Japan today that possibility has been completely crushed. It was abundantly clear from the Fukushima disaster that no one in this country is going to take responsibility.

Hirano: You've already talked about how TEPCO and the government made huge mistakes in dealing with the problem immediately after the accident.

What do you see as the definitive mistake that led to this disaster?

Koide: There's a ton of them. Any specialist would have known right away there had been a meltdown, and that everyone needed to be evacuated immediately. And evacuating to 20 km away is totally inadequate. Iitate village some 40-50 km away received an enormous amount of contamination and was neglected for over a month.

Soma residents evacuated to Iitate, this kind of stupidity cannot stand, the government's criminal mistakes.

**The Hosokawa family of Iitate Village
continues to live in the heavily radiated
area to look after their horses (2014).
More than a dozen horses died since
2011.**

Kasai: I'm deeply taken by your previous discussion on responsibility. It's really a story of something with no owner. A golf course that has had to close because it is considered contaminated with radiation from TEPCO's plant has recently sued. TEPCO's top attorneys argued in defense that the radiation is not their property, which would make it no one's property and therefore TEPCO is not responsible. It seems the opposite of what you've just said about responsibility, to be sure, yet this declaration of complete lack of responsibility, once passed through the logic and system of the courts, these lawyers have arrived at precisely this conclusion. It is not a question of individual responsibility; it is a problem of the social system. Lack of any responsibility is the basis of the entire social system. What are your thoughts on this?

Koide: It's exactly as you say. This is what it has come to. I couldn't care less about a country like that. But in order to overcome this situation, it's something I mentioned earlier, but there is no way but for rather foolish citizens to get smarter. Only each individual standing up for his or her own way is going to do it.

Hirano: You've also talked about "responsibility for being fooled." You've said that even the deceived are guilty and stressed that they too must take responsibility. How do you think about this at the individual level? For example, you've often stated that there should be a new food labeling system put in place by which especially the generation that agreed to build the reactors would be obliged to eat the contaminated food—would this be an example of taking individual responsibility for you?

Koide: Yes, that's exactly what I mean. So, because I think that every Japanese adult has responsibility for both allowing the rampant development of nuclear power and the Fukushima disaster, I said that they should be the ones to eat the contaminated food. And so that this disaster

may never happen again, nuclear power must be eliminated—of course there should be no question of restarting the reactors. Yet, what I've just said is not really a widespread idea. Slowly all the reactors are being restarted.

Hirano: So in that sense Japanese citizens' responsibility is increasing in that they are allowing the restart of the reactors.

Koide: I think the nuclear power issue is precisely analogous to the war.

Hirano: Indeed, as with the damage of misinformation and national morality discourse we talked about and the pressure that comes from those hints of someone being somehow "un-Japanese," it seems to really resemble the war.

Koide: I think so, yes.

Hirano: I'd like to ask more about the responsibility for being misled. Up to now the reason most would say that nuclear power has been allowed is the myth of safety—a myth invented by the coordination of the government, TEPCO, and the media. So Japanese citizens have been robbed of being told the truth, of having the chance to know the truth.

Koide: That's true.

Hirano: So the likely response to your position would be that it's unjust to blame those who were robbed of the chance to know the truth. How would you answer this challenge?

Koide: I also said that the current situation is just like during the war. Then, too, the media only reported the information coming from imperial headquarters: The Japanese military enjoyed nothing but a string of victories. We were all told that because of the emperor Japan was a divine country and therefore could not lose. You would go to school and there would be the emperor's portrait hanging on the wall. There was a place where the emperor was enshrined right there on school grounds. Every child was taught that the emperor was present there.

In such a country it wasn't strange to think that Japan would win the war. But those who knew more about the world, including of course those in the military, knew that Japan could not win. Still they said nothing. And so everyone was swept along with the current.

But history is harsh, and in the end Japan was battered. And people at that time said, "Ah, we've been misled. The military are the culprits." But even within all of this there were those who resisted the war. The number of people tortured and killed by the Special Higher Police was huge. And those people, too, were labeled as "un-Japanese" and ostracized from society by the majority of the population. Whole families, whole groups of people were obliterated.

So those who lived then were duped, they were given false information. But should they say that's where their responsibility ends? I would respond that even if they were duped, the duped still bear the responsibility of the duped. How did each and every one of them live their lives during the war? How did they deal with the information they were being given? I think we

need to include these kinds of questions when we interrogate ourselves over taking responsibility. Now if you say this people get angry but I think without question the emperor has absolute responsibility for the war. We ended up moving on without trying to pursue the emperor's war responsibility.

Even today you'll see people happily shouting "Tennō heika banzai," Long Live the Emperor. At midnight NHK will broadcast the Japanese flag flapping in the wind. I can't stand that and so don't watch TV. Most Japanese get happy when they hear 'honorable' addresses by His Majesty the Emperor or news about the imperial family. From the bottom of my heart I think we should have pursued his war crimes and punished him with whatever it takes, including execution. I have been saying this and people get very angry.

I am told not to criticize the emperor. They say if I do I'll harm the anti-nuclear movement.

Hirano: Even people in the anti-nuclear movement warn you about things like that? A critical reference to the emperor's wartime responsibility could be fatally divisive for the movement?

Koide: Those roots are that strong when you talk about war responsibility. But as I have mentioned to you, I feel at the bottom of my heart that each and every individual must take personal responsibility for how he or she lived his or her life. That's the reason why I wanted the emperor to take his responsibility as a person.

We must build such a country. Even the duped and the lied to have responsibility as individual human beings. It's true for those who lived through the war, and it's true for those who promote nuclear power in Japan today—indeed it's true for everyone on earth. Each one, should they be deceived, is responsible for being deceived.

Hirano/Kasai: Well we've gone on long today and heard some really important things. Thank you very much.

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Notes

1

Koide Hiroaki, "The Truth About Nuclear Power: Japanese Nuclear Engineer Calls for Abolition," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol 9, Issue 31 No 5, August 1, 2011.

2

Translator's note: There is also a significant amount Cs-134 (although now perhaps 20% of Cs-137 totals). Large amounts of Cs have flowed into the ocean as well. Cs-134 is the main tracer for following Fukushima effluents in the ocean. I am indebted to Timothy Mousseau for this insight.

3

放射線管理区域 "Controlled area means an area, outside of a restricted

area but inside the site boundary, access to which can be limited by the licensee for any reason."

4

See the English translation of his testimony at the Diet: Koide Hiroaki, "The Truth About Nuclear Power: Japanese Nuclear Engineer Calls for Abolition" *The Asia-Pacific Journal* Vol 9, Issue 31 No 5, August 1, 2011.

5

"Tanemaki Journal," an Osaka based radio show by Mainichi Broadcasting Station, began to air critical evaluations of the Fukushima incident immediately after March 11th. Tanemaki Journal invited Koide as a commentator on a daily basis and he offered astute and up-to-date comments on the disaster. Despite, or perhaps because of, its popularity, according to some reports, the radio program was shut down in July 2012 under pressure from Kansai Electric Power Company which was a major sponsor of the TV station MBS. When Mainichi announced the termination of Tanemaki, listeners protested outside the company's office. The program won a Sakata Memorial Journalism Award in March 2012.

6

Kariya Tetsu, *Oi Shinbo 111 Fukushima no shinjitsu* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2014). The episode was published in April 28th, 2014 in a popular comic book. After returning from their visit to Fukushima, Protagonist and his father began to feel very dull and experienced nosebleeds. The episode developed into a social and political issue as it came under attack by conservative politicians and media for stirring up "damage by rumor."

7

Oi Shinbo discusses the theory that nosebleeds may be the result of ionizing radiation that converts H₂O in the nasal passages to the hydroxyl radical HO which can then form hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂), see Kariya, *Oi Shinbo*, 111: 240-48.

8

Kyushu Electric Power Co. (KEPCO) reactivated the No. 1 reactor in August 2015 and No. 2 in October in the same year. Abe Shinzō's government expressed confidence in the safety the restart by calling the new safety measure "the world toughest." According to the Japan Times, the government plans to have nuclear power account for 20 to 22 percent of the country's total electricity supply by 2030, compared with roughly 30 percent before the disaster at the Fukushima complex. The government continues with the policy despite the overwhelming public opposition against the reactivation of the reactors and the clear evidence that Japanese economy is sustainable without nuclear energy.

9

Mutō Ruiko and Fukushima residents filed a lawsuit against TEPCO and the Japanese government officials, seeking criminal responsibility for the Fukushima nuclear accident. Muto's interview will be published in the Asia-Pacific Journal this year.

10

In September 2015, TEPCO released its first 850 tons of filtered radioactive groundwater into the sea. This is a part of TEPCO's "subdrain plan" that was approved in late July, 2015, after a year-long battle with local fishermen who opposed the release fearing that it would pollute the ocean and contaminate the marine life. 300 tons of contaminated water is being generated at the plant daily. TEPCO has yet to deal with remaining 680,000 tons of highly contaminated water that was used to cool the reactors during the 2011 meltdown.

11

Kashiwazaki is a city in Niigata prefecture.

12

The Tokaimura nuclear accident occurred on September 30th 1999, resulting in two deaths. It was the worst civilian nuclear radiation accident in Japan prior to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster of 2011. The criticality accident happened in a uranium processing facility operated by JCO, a subsidiary of Sumitomo Metal Mining Co. in the village of Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture. Both the national and the prefectural governments failed to deal promptly with the accident due to the lack of evacuation plan and Tatsuya Murakai, then the mayor of the Tokaimura, decided to evacuate villagers from the affected area. 27 workers, who contained the crisis, were exposed to radioactivity.

13

Tanaka Shōzō (1841-1913) is considered to be Japan's first environmentalist. Tanaka is well known for his activism in connection with pollution caused by waste from the Ashio Copper Mine in Tochigi prefecture. From the mid-1880s, the Watarase river near the mine became heavily contaminated by mine waste and in 1890 a large flood carried poisonous waste from the mine into surrounding fields and villages. Tanaka took the cause to the National Diet as a member of the House of Representatives, but it ended with little success. In 1900, Tanaka and villagers in the valley of the Watarase river planned a mass protest in Tokyo, but were stopped and dispersed by government troops. He resigned from the Diet in 1901 and made a direct appeal to Emperor Meiji. He became the supporter of local autonomy and developed his own anti-war, anti-imperialist, and environmental philosophy. He died of cancer in Yanaka village in 1913.

Katsuya Hirano is Associate Professor of History at UCLA. He is the author of *The Politics of Dialogic Imagination: Power and Popular Culture in Early Modern Japan* (Chicago). This interview is the second installment of his oral history project on Fukushima in *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. The first

interview was with Murakami Tatsuya: *"Fukushima and the Crisis of Democracy: Interview with Murakami Tatsuya"*, The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 13, Issue 20, No. 1, May 25, 2015.

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Perspective on Koide's interview

Nuclear Disasters: A Much Greater Event Has Already Taken Place

Robert Stolz

3/11 and Japanese Resilience Five Years Later

March 15, 2016

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Koide Hiroaki has dedicated his career to preventing a nuclear disaster in Japan. That disaster has now happened. As we learn in this wide-ranging and important interview, the accident often referred to as 3/11 was enormous and in many ways unprecedented. The full scope of the disaster is still unknown, but is clearly on the scale of Chernobyl, placing the amount of radioactive material released into the atmosphere possibly up to 1,000 times the Hiroshima bombing of 1945. Professor Koide's reporting in his many books, interviews, and radio programs is essential reading for anyone wishing to learn the nature and extent of the radiological event of March 2011 and beyond. But early in the interview we learn something else. For while in ways unprecedented, 3/11 is also a part of a historical series of nuclear exposures from the Trinity test in the New Mexico desert in July 1945, to the Castle-Bravo Lucky Dragon Incident of 1954, to Semipalatinsk, to Chernobyl, and to the next sure-to-happen event.¹ In fact, while it is clear that the urgent social, political, and medical task right now is the acute contamination of land, air, sea, and bodies by the Fukushima dai-ichi meltdowns, as Prof. Koide says, as bad as Fukushima is, "a much greater event has already taken place." His immediate reference is **the enormous amount radioactive material released in the atmospheric testing from 1945 to 1980.**²

Though many decades in the past, these radioactive releases at the height of the Cold War continue to contaminate the entire globe. Originally, huge amounts of radioactive material, several times greater than Chernobyl or Fukushima, were released into the air and dispersed by the prevailing winds and jet stream before falling on the oceans and land contaminating huge areas of the earth-especially in the main test sites in the South Pacific, the US West, and Kazakhstan. But some of this released material breached the tropopause, the soft barrier between the troposphere and the stratosphere, escaping the troposphere before becoming trapped aloft in the stratosphere. Recently it has been discovered that major spring thunderstorms-and notably the 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland- regularly rise high enough to breach the tropopause. Radioactive particles, mostly plutonium and Cesium-137, now decades old, attach

to the storms and fall back to earth as a fresh contamination of material from atmospheric testing. As prof. Koide points out this means that **the entire earth has been and continues to be exposed to radiation from these tests**. Following the widely accepted model of radiation exposure as damaging at all levels-the linear, no threshold model (LNT)-it follows that this exposure led to a rise of damage to global health, especially childhood thyroid cancer, leukemia, and other health effects.³

But 3/11 is not only one in a series of radiation contaminations dating back to the birth of the atomic age. These nuclear disasters are also part of a larger historical series of toxic events dating back to the birth of the industrial age. Prof. Koide himself notes the parallels of his own work with the Japanese anti-pollution activist Tanaka Shōzō's (1841-1913) fight against the pollution of the Watarase and Tone rivers north of Tokyo by the Ashio Copper Mine in the 1890s. Fukushima must be seen in the context of these other toxic events, one in a series which, though the particular pollutant may have been different, all share a family resemblance: **each names a particular site of industrial capitalist production that results in the contamination of a space that in turn requires the sacrifice of that region for future use and the loss of the means of life by any who live in the area**. The list of these national sacrifice zones is long and growing: Ashio, Minamata, Grassy Narrows, Ontario, Hinkley, California, the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxic Zone, Bikini Atoll, the "downwind" sections of the Great Basin of eastern California, Nevada, and western Utah,⁴ Hanford, Washington and Ozersk, Kazakhstan,⁵ Chernobyl. The list now includes a region some 20km around Fukushima dai-ichi.

Tanaka Shōzō glimpsed the logic of the national sacrifice zone in 1902 when he fought against the Japanese state's seizing of the village of Yanaka and displacing its residents in order to build a flood control reservoir. For Tanaka, this enormous re-making of the Watarase and Tone rivers signaled no less than converting an entire watershed that had served as a centuries-long source of production and sustenance into a sink of contaminants: "If [the pollution] continues too long, the river's headwaters will trickle out from a poisoned mountain of foul rocks and polluted soil that wholly penetrates the water, forming a second [toxic] nature (*dai ni no tensei o nashi*); once this happens there will be no saving anyone."⁶ This event was the turning point in Japan's environmental history, one that was repeated across the globe in the 19-20th centuries. **The insatiable drive for more powerful energy sources to fuel more economic growth is everywhere hitting barriers, creating more and more national sacrifice zones on larger and larger scales.**

The growing toxicity of daily life stretches from the local and personal in the toxic working environments of computer production and waste disposal to the truly global. With global warming, ocean acidification, bioaccumulation of mercury, desertification, and countless other alarming trends we risk sacrificing the earth itself as these trends combine to make the earth less and less amenable to increased or even stable production of the means of subsistence. 2002 marked an uptick in global food prices that has continued to this day, reversing a centuries long trend of cheaper food-a trend that drove much of the economic progress since the nineteenth century. Global food prices in 2014 were 127% of 2002⁷ and show few signs of stopping their rise. The implications for increasing toxicity and undemocratic politics in an era of unprecedented rising food prices are dire, as the motivation to dig deeper for water and nutrients will require even greater projects that demand ever greater chemical and energy inputs.

The Cosmic Horror of Hoshanō sekai

Even so the nuclear question remains special-a culmination or apotheosis of this longer trend. As we learn in the interview, a nuclear disaster is different from other contaminations. Because of the very nature of radiation, namely its spatial and temporal scales, in many ways we lack a language adequate to a world lorded over by radiation. The literary genre called Cosmic Horror of Algernon Blackwood or H. P. Lovecraft has long attempted to grasp the frightening realities of unleashing a force that operates on such

a-human scales and temporalities as plutonium-239 (half-life over 24,000 years) or uranium-235 (half-life over 700 million years). The Horror writer and arch-pessimist Thomas Ligotti perhaps comes closest to describing the implications of unleashing truly astronomical forces into human everyday life when he writes: "Such is the motif of supernatural horror: Something terrible in its being comes forward and makes its claim as a shareholder in our reality, or what we think is our reality and ours alone. It may be an emissary from the grave, or an esoteric monstrosity.... It may be the offspring of a scientific experiment with unintended consequences.... Or it may be a world unto itself of pure morbidity, one suffused with a profound sense of doom without a name - Edgar Allan Poe's world."⁸ In our present of 2016 the sense of doom does have a name: Hoshanō sekai-Radiation's World. Radiation's World announces that the earth-or at least large parts of it-is no longer exclusively ours. We have rendered huge spaces of the planet off limits for time periods beyond any scale of recorded history.⁹ Parallel to but different than the rapacious depletion of the natural world from forests to cod stocks to fossil fuels that took millennia to build up but are consumed in decades, as we mine deeper temporalities in pursuit of open ended consumption we have also unleashed anti-human temporalities incompatible with continued production or consumption.¹⁰ It is these spaces that are now ruled by radiation and are no longer part of human society. Like the old Horror trope, **we have unleashed forces that we cannot contain**. But unlike Horror, there is no discrete monster to kill at the end.¹¹ Pessimism is surely called for.

Though our world of cosmic horror may have a name, hoshanō sekai likely does not have a politics. At Ashio, Tanaka fought the re-engineering of the watershed by building different relations to the river in the doomed village of Yanaka, a politics he called Yanaka Studies (*Yanakagaku*). In the post-war period the physician and activist Harada Masazumi called his effort to rebuild the fishing village poisoned by methyl mercury effluent Minamata Studies (*Minamatagaku*). And globally there is the Salvagepunk movement to reclaim abandoned urban zones by reassembling of collapsing infrastructure from Detroit to the Parisian banlieues.¹² But the very nature of radiation thwarts this process. There cannot be an Atomic Punk. The 20 km zone around the Fukushima plant has been appropriated by radiation and will not be re-appropriated by humans for decades - the site itself remains off limits for much longer. Because the monitoring equipment was destroyed by the accident itself, the oft-cited maximum recorded doses of 25 mSv/yr cover only the first four months of the disaster and only include external radiation. Adding internal radiation through inhaling radioactive dust or consumption of radioactive food and water means the levels are necessarily higher. Further, current readings take only the readings in the air and not in the soil or water.¹³ A purely technical fix seems unlikely as even robots may not safely venture onto the reactor site, putting a pessimistic spin on the term post-human. The contamination has its own lifespan; it can only be moved and hopefully contained, in some cases for millennia. Populations cannot safely repopulate the area no matter what alternative politics they may practice. **As prof. Koide and many others note, there is nothing to do but cede the ground to radiation and relocate.**

Though a long planned Cold War prelude to the remilitarization of Japan, the new State Secrets Law of 2014 was predictably used first to control the information on the levels of contamination outside the 20km exclusion zone. And thus the long historical trend linking toxicity and undemocratic politics is renewed and extended. **It is likely this very nexus of toxicity and undemocratic politics that is the source of the repetition compulsion at the core of the historical series of national sacrifice zones.** Just as the existence of nuclear weapons requires a national security state, the existence of nuclear power presupposes appropriation of the kind resisted since Ashio. In short, the nuclear reactors instantiate a fundamentally untenable social relation to nature-and thus a fundamentally untenable social relation to life itself. What is called for is a new environmental regime based on an ecologically sound everyday life. This is Tanaka's Yanaka Studies. It is the physician Harada Masazumi's Minamata Studies, and it is a yet to

be formed Fukushima Studies. But a Fukushima Studies must start, as Prof. Koide tells us, with the immediate end to nuclear power. **Though radiation contamination does not have a technical fix, it may have a political one.** As Prof. Koide says, Germany has done just this: declared an end to nuclear power.¹⁴ This is the necessarily political decision that can then be the basis of a new energy regime. This is not easy, but it is possible. The encouraging grassroots politicization of "electricity conservation" (setsuden) of recent years has shown the feasibility of just such a new energy regime in Japan, one without nuclear power or increased imports of polluting coal and oil. But this trend is countered by others. In the face of strong anti-nuclear protests, the Abe government has already restarted reactors in Kyushu, and just as Prof. Koide feared in his discussion of the 2014 LDP election, the government has plans to restart the others moving towards a Japanese energy regime hardly changed from before the Fukushima disaster. Prof. Koide's career was not able to prevent the disaster. But his message still points the way to a better future. With the popular mood turned into a political movement—a movement that the 2014 election shows is not yet currently on the horizon—a less toxic, more democratic society is surely possible. More, it is necessary.

Recommended citation: Robert Stolz, *"Nuclear Disasters: A Much Greater Event Has Already Taken Place Robert Stolz"*, *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 14, Issue 6, No. 2, March 15, 2016.

Notes

1

Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents: Living With High-Risk Technologies* (Princeton University Press, 1999); Paul Virilio, "The Primal Accident," in *The Politics of Everyday Fear*, ed. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

2

The United States and the Soviet Union signed a test ban treaty for 1963, but France continued atmospheric testing until 1974 and China until 1980.

3

As the Chernobyl and Fukushima researcher Timothy Mousseau has shown, cancer is only one of the damaging health effects of ionizing radiation. His studies of birds and rodents have shown smaller brain sizes, male sterility, cataracts, and reduced life-spans. Personal communication, February 2016.

4

Mike Davis, *Dead Cities: And Other Tales* (New Press, The, 2003), 33, 40.

5

For the shared toxic legacy of both sides of the Cold War see in English Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters* (Oxford University Press, 2015). In Japanese see Suga Hidemi, *Han genpatsu no shisōshi: reisen kara Fukushima e* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2012).

6

Quoted in Robert Stolz, *Bad Water: Nature, Pollution, and Politics in Japan, 1870–1950* (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, and Society) (Duke University Press Books, 2014), 98.

7

Jason W. Moore, "Cheap Food and Bad Climate: From Surplus Value to Negative Value in the Capitalist World Ecology," *Critical Historical Studies* Spring (2015), 18-19.

8

Thomas Ligotti, *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race: A Contrivance of Horror* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2011), 57.

9

The failed but instructive Pentagon program to attempt to craft a warning not to open Yucca Mountain that could be understood by any civilization some 10,000 years in the future-beyond the time span of existing human language-immediately runs into Lovecraftian notions of time and ancient angry gods buried in deep in the earth. See Peter van Wyck, *Signs of Danger: Waste, Trauma, and Nuclear Threat* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

10

The alien origin of the "black oil" of the X-Files speaks to this cosmic horror while also linking it to fossil fuel consumption. See for example Justin McBrien, "Accumulating Extinction: Planetary Catastrophism in the Necrocene" in Jason W. Moore, ed., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM Press, forthcoming).

11

Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster," *Commentary* October (1965).

12

Evan Calder Williams, *Combined and Uneven Apocalypse* (Washington: Zero Books, 2011), chapter two.

13

Hiroataka Kasai: "Kasai: So...about the airborne radiation dosage and the soil contamination, there is a public entity that measures and publishes the airborne levels. But the soil contamination is not measured. I remember reading about Chernobyl that the soil contamination levels are the standard by which one gets the right to evacuation and refuge. But Japan only measures the air." Unpublished interview with Koide Hiroaki, December 2014. See also, Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Touching the Grass: Science, Uncertainty and Everyday Life from Chernobyl to Fukushima" in *Science, Technology, & Society* 19:3 (2014): 331-362.

14

Koide: "Take Germany for example. There both the government and industry decided to eliminate nuclear power. When it came to the question of what happens to all the people in that industry the answer led to entirely new jobs being born. In short, if the decision is made to eliminate nuclear power, and the entire society works towards that goal, then I think it can be done - even though people hooked on the drug will truly believe that they will die without it. So the job is to show them that is not the case, that we can build an alternative one piece at a time. Then again, that's really my responsibility isn't it?" (Laughs).

Unpublished interview December 2014.

Not just weapons

May 27, 2016

VOX POPULI: Let Obama's visit spark debate on nuclear power, not just weapons

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201605270041.html>

A group of Kyoto University students held an "A-bomb exhibition" in various parts of Japan in 1951, according to Tetsuo Obata's book "Senryoka no 'Genbakuten'" ("A-Bomb exhibition" in Occupied Japan). At that time, any information concerning the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 was strictly suppressed by the General Headquarters of the Allied Forces.

The students were obstructed by Japanese law enforcement authorities, but still managed to show the public the extent of the A-bomb damage for the first time.

The exhibits included photos of keloidal scars and other forms of radiation damage as well as a series of paintings from "Genbaku no Zu" (The Hiroshima Panels) by Iri Maruki and his wife, Toshi. The paintings depict the immediate aftermath of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, such as people with their skin hanging off.

At the exhibition, the students hung a panel with this message: "Liberate the fire of Prometheus from the A-bombs and transform it into a new flame of peace and happiness of the human race!"

It was their hope that nuclear power would become a gift for humanity, just as Prometheus in Greek mythology stole fire from Mount Olympus and gave it to mankind.

Thus, postwar Japan proceeded with the construction of nuclear power plants in the name of "peaceful utilization of nuclear energy."

Not only did the harrowing A-bomb experiences fail to deter Japan from relying on nuclear power generation, the experiences actually led to Japan embracing nuclear power generation.

U.S. President Barack Obama is visiting Hiroshima on May 27. I hope this will become a day for everyone to think about the utter inhumanity of nuclear weapons and how they can be eliminated.

But having experienced the Fukushima disaster, Japan cannot ignore the potential horrors of another nuclear plant accident.

A poem by Masao Ishii goes to the effect: "I don't know how to treat A-bomb victims/ There is no medicine, and I feel helpless." This piece expresses the writer's feeling of profound regret at not being able to do anything for people who have been exposed to radiation.

This poem could actually apply to Japan itself, which is still struggling in vain to bring the consequences of the Fukushima disaster under control.

The dismantling of nuclear reactors is not proceeding smoothly, and many evacuees are still unable to return home.

Obama's visit to Hiroshima is unlikely to start many conversations on nuclear power generation, but that is exactly why we must talk and think about it.

--The Asahi Shimbun, May 27

* * *

Vox Populi, Vox Dei is a popular daily column that takes up a wide range of topics, including culture, arts and social trends and developments. Written by veteran Asahi Shimbun writers, the column provides useful perspectives on and insights into contemporary Japan and its culture.

Injunction sought against Ikata restart

June 2, 2016

Residents seek injunction against reactor restart

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20160531_33/

A group of residents in Ehime Prefecture, western Japan, is seeking a court injunction to suspend the restart of a nuclear reactor, claiming earthquake safety concerns.

Twelve residents filed for the injunction at the Matsuyama District Court on Tuesday. They want to stop a plan by Shikoku Electric Power Company to resume operation of the No.3 reactor at the Ikata nuclear plant in late July.

The residents point out that the Ikata plant is located about 5 kilometers from Japan's longest fault system. They say the operator must assume the possibility of significant earthquakes in the near future, after the powerful quakes that struck Kumamoto Prefecture in April. Those tremors occurred along faults linked to the major fault system.

They say that the level of earthquake preparedness claimed by the operator is not sufficient.

Another group of residents in Ehime has already filed for a similar injunction.

And residents in Hiroshima Prefecture, on the other side of the Inland Sea, have also requested a court injunction to suspend the reactor's restart.

Public outcry over radioactive soil project

June 8, 2016

Radioactive soil to be used to build roads set to spark uproar

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201606080056.html>

By YU KOTSUBO/ Staff Writer

A public outcry is expected when radioactive earth from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster is recycled and used to construct roads and in other building projects.

"Fierce resistance would likely arise if the contaminated earth were used in prefectures other than Fukushima Prefecture," said an official at an Environment Ministry study meeting on June 7.

But Shinji Inoue, senior vice environment minister, said the ministry will proceed with recycling despite expected opposition.

"We are set to promote the reuse (of contaminated earth) by endeavoring to gain public understanding across the country, including Fukushima Prefecture," he said after the meeting.

Polluted earth will be covered by either clean earth, concrete, asphalt or other material to minimize radiation exposure to construction workers and residents living near the facilities built using radioactive soil.

Twenty-two million cubic meters, the equivalent of 18 Tokyo Dome stadiums, is the amount of contaminated soil expected to be produced in total from the cleanup work in areas around the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant and elsewhere in the prefecture. It is unclear how much of the polluted soil will be used in building projects.

Ministry officials decided at the meeting that the soil to be recycled will be restricted to that in which radioactivity measures 8,000 becquerels or less per kilogram.

The recycling is aimed to cut the amount of radioactive soil to be shipped to other prefectures for final disposal.

If the soil has more than 8,000 becquerels of radioactivity per kilogram, the central government is obliged under law to safely dispose of it.

The ministry envisages the use of contaminated earth for raising the ground level in the construction of roads, seawalls, railways and other public works projects.

It can also be used to cover waste at disposal sites.

The 22 million cubic meters of soil is to be kept at the interim storage site to be built near the crippled nuclear plant in Fukushima Prefecture. After being kept there for about 30 years, it is scheduled under law to be dumped outside the prefecture.

Residents file request to revoke restart permit (Sendai)

June 10, 2016

Residents file for revoking reactor restart permit

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20160610_27/

A group of people has asked a court to cancel permits by Japan's nuclear regulator for operating 2 reactors at a plant in Kagoshima Prefecture, southwestern Japan.

The No.1 and 2 reactors at the Sendai plant are the country's only online reactors. The Nuclear Regulation Authority gave the permits in 2014.

More than 30 residents of Kagoshima and Fukuoka prefectures and elsewhere joined the suit filed on Friday with the Fukuoka District Court.

They said the permits should be revoked due to risks of a massive volcanic eruption, and that new government regulations to prepare nuclear plants for disasters are insufficient.

The plaintiffs say the requirements are not based on scientific knowledge about volcanic eruptions, and that the regulator does not fully examine the possibility of mega-eruptions in its screening.

A plaintiff from Kagoshima City says an accident at the plant could cause effects of radioactive substances for decades. She says she wants the court to properly decide whether the facility should be allowed to operate.

The authority has declined to comment on the lawsuit, saying it has not received relevant documentation.

In 2014, another group of residents filed a request to block a restart of the reactors, but a district court and a high court dismissed the petition.

Shocking commercials from TEPCO

June 17, 2016

TEPCO's nuclear commercials draw disgust from evacuees

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201606170058.html>

By YASUKAZU AKADA/ Staff Writer

The narration over uplifting music boasts of repeated safety drills and enhanced capabilities to judge and act in nuclear plant emergencies.

Workers in blue uniforms and hard hats appear, declaring: "We will devote our entire energy to drills so that we can deal with any circumstance."

This TV commercial in Niigata Prefecture never fails to draw a look of disgust from a 41-year-old woman. The woman and her two children, then aged 1 and 3, were forced to flee their home in Fukushima Prefecture to Niigata Prefecture after the 2011 triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

The crippled plant is operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co., the producer of that commercial.

"The mess caused by the nuclear accident has yet to be cleaned up," she said. "There are still evacuees facing hardships because they have no prospects for the future. If TEPCO has money to use for commercials, it should use it to support the evacuees."

TEPCO, in fact, created six different commercials for an advertising campaign that started in June last year. The commercials have been aired a total of 320 times a month on four private broadcasting stations based in Niigata Prefecture, according to the utility.

By promoting the safety of nuclear power through the commercials, TEPCO hopes to gain support for its plan to resume operations at some of the seven reactors of its now-idle Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in the prefecture.

The commercials have drawn the opposite reaction from many of about 3,000 evacuees from Fukushima Prefecture who currently live in Niigata Prefecture.

In April this year, residents and evacuees in Niigata Prefecture visited TEPCO's head office in Tokyo and submitted a letter of protest along with about 1,900 signatures. They demanded the company suspend the commercials and disclose the costs for the campaign.

Complaints have also been directed at Chubu Electric Power Co.'s TV commercials for nuclear power generation in Shizuoka Prefecture.

The company's first post-3/11 commercial started airing on four private broadcasting stations in 2012, mainly explaining the company's safety measures.

In July 2015, the utility began to air an eight-part series of commercials, in which employees working at a nuclear power plant appear with the lovely voice of a female vocalist in the background.

"In order to protect this place even at midnight," and "We will engage in a drill again today" are among the captions shown in one part titled, "Nighttime training."

After the Fukushima nuclear disaster unfolded, Nagoya-based Chubu Electric Power suspended all reactors at its Hamaoka nuclear power plant in Omaezaki, Shizuoka Prefecture, under the request of the then Democratic Party of Japan-led government headed by Prime Minister Naoto Kan.

The utility is preparing to resume operations at some of the Hamaoka reactors, despite anxieties about the safety of the nuclear plant. The plant has been described as the most dangerous in Japan, given its proximity to a long-expected huge earthquake off the prefecture.

In 2012, a civic group made a request to Shizuoka Governor Heita Kawakatsu to hold a referendum on whether the Hamaoka plant should be restarted.

The group also presented about 165,000 signatures.

“The commercials on nuclear power plants are a unilateral strategy to improve image they project,” Shigeki Nishihara, mayor of Makinohara, located next to Omaezaki, said. “It is necessary for Chubu Electric Power to repeatedly hold dialogue and discussions with the people who have anxieties and doubts about nuclear power plants in order to educate itself.”

Not safe to restart

June 24, 2016

Protesters hold rally at Ikata plant

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20160624_21/

People opposing the restart of a reactor at Shikoku Electric Power Company's Ikata nuclear plant in Ehime Prefecture have held a rally in front of the complex.

Around 10 people, including members of an Ehime-based civic group, gathered near the plant's main entrance on Friday and chanted slogans against the restart.

They read out a statement protesting the insertion of nuclear fuel into the No.3 unit.

The statement said the system for transmitting electricity to the plant cannot withstand a powerful earthquake and the plant's safety cannot be guaranteed. A stable power supply is needed to maintain the cooling of the reactor.

One of the protesters said that in view of the powerful temblors that struck Kumamoto, the operator should not rush the process of inserting fuel into the reactor.

Shareholders say no to nukes



June 28, 2016

Shareholders urge Japan's utilities to end nuclear power generation

Kyodo

Shareholders urged nine power companies Tuesday to end nuclear power generation, reflecting safety concerns lingering since the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

However, the proposals were turned down at the firms' shareholders meetings.

The companies, including Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc., operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear complex, are seeking to reactivate their plants.

At its shareholders meeting Tuesday, Tepco's recently revealed instruction not to use the term "core meltdown" in describing the situation at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear complex in the early days of the crisis drew criticism from shareholders and company President Naomi Hirose apologized over the matter. "I apologize for causing trouble and anxiety," Hirose told the meeting.

Referring to the incident, one shareholder said at the meeting, "It was a cover-up. I am infuriated. All nuclear reactors should be scrapped."

Some shareholders of Kyushu Electric Power Co. demanded that the utility halt operations of its nuclear reactors after the Nos. 1 and 2 units at its Sendai complex in Kagoshima Prefecture were brought back online last year.

Its shareholders meeting Tuesday was the first since the reactors were restarted.

Kyushu Electric Power President Michiaki Uriu told the meeting that the company returned to the black for the first time in five years in the fiscal year ended March 2016 thanks in part to the reactivation of the two reactors.

As for the idled No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Genkai plant in Saga Prefecture, he said: "We are aiming at resumption as soon as possible."

Among other utilities, Shikoku Electric Power Co. is planning to resume operations at the No. 3 unit at the Ikata power plant in Ehime Prefecture in July.

Kansai Electric Power Co., which mainly serves western Japan, said it will seek an early restart of its nuclear power plants to bring down power costs.

The company suspended operation of the No. 3 unit at the Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture following a court injunction in March to stop the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors. The No. 4 unit was already offline at the time of the court order due to a technical issue.

"It is time to depart from nuclear power dependency by taking to heart the lessons learned from the nuclear accident at Tepco's Fukushima No. 1 plant," Kyoto Mayor Daisaku Kadokawa told Kansai Electric's shareholders meeting.

Among the many shareholders seeking an end to nuclear power generation, some questioned the justification for continued reliance on nuclear plants, while others voiced worries over what would happen in the event of larger earthquakes than the plant designers budgeted for.

A total of 73 proposals were made by shareholders to the nine utilities. In addition to calls to end nuclear power generation, there were also proposals to give up the nuclear fuel cycle in which plutonium is extracted through spent fuel reprocessing — a program pursued by the power industry and the government.

Shareholders call on utilities to abandon nuclear energy

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201606280064.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

)

Japan's nine major electric power companies faced renewed calls to end their dependence on nuclear energy at their annual shareholders' meetings on June 28.

However, as such proposals require approval by a two-thirds majority of shareholders with voting rights for passage, all were expected to be rejected.

A total of 73 motions from shareholders were submitted at the meetings of the nine utilities. Many called on the companies to leave nuclear power generation.

But executives again stressed the need for nuclear plants to turn a profit.

At the shareholders' meeting held by Kyushu Electric Power Co., President Michiaki Uriu said: "We have been able to secure a profit due to the resumption of operations at nuclear plants and a large decrease in fuel costs. We will work toward an early resumption of operations at the Genkai nuclear plant (in Saga Prefecture)."

Kyushu Electric Power resumed operations last year at two reactors of the Sendai nuclear power plant in Satsuma-Sendai, Kagoshima Prefecture, in southern Kyushu.

Kansai Electric Power Co. also resumed operations at two reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture in central Japan this year, but the Otsu District Court issued a temporary injunction to halt them.

"We will make every effort to gain the understanding of society, starting with local residents," President Makoto Yagi said at the Kansai Electric Power shareholders' meeting on June 28. "Nuclear plants are an

important energy source from the standpoint of economics and environmental issues. We will implement a cut in electricity rates as soon as possible through an early resumption of operations."

At the Tokyo Electric Power Co. Holdings Inc. meeting, President Naomi Hirose said: "We will proceed with measures to allow us to work on the important corporate issue of resuming operations at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant (in Niigata Prefecture)."

Hirose also apologized for a delay in announcing that meltdowns had occurred at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami struck in March 2011.

Members of the Nuclear Phase-Out TEPCO Shareholder's Movement handed out fliers in front of the venue for the TEPCO meeting.

Yui Kimura, 63, a leading member of the group, criticized the revelation about covering up the meltdown at the Fukushima plant.

"TEPCO is trying to resume operations at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant without taking responsibility for the accident," Kimura said.

Another shareholder, Fusako Iwata, 66, from Gifu Prefecture, said: "At that time, the public believed without question what the central government and TEPCO said. We will not be deceived again."

Imari mayor again Genkai restart

July 5, 2016

Local mayor vows not to approve restart of Genkai nuke plant

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160705/p2a/00m/0na/004000c>

IMARI, Saga -- Imari Mayor Yoshikazu Tsukabe said on July 4 that he had no intention of approving a plan to restart the Genkai Nuclear Power Plant in Saga Prefecture.

- **【Related】** Shareholders urge utilities to end nuclear power generation
- **【Related】** High court denies injunction against MOX fuel use at nuclear plant
- **【Related】** Quake scale may be underestimated in calculations for nuclear plants: Ex-NRA official

The Saga Prefecture city of Imari falls within 30 kilometers from Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Genkai nuclear power station. Imari Mayor Tsukabe said at a regular news conference, "I have no intention of giving consent to restarting (the nuclear plant)."

It is the first time for the head of a municipal government among eight municipalities in three prefectures of Saga, Fukuoka and Nagasaki that are within 30 kilometers from the Genkai nuclear plant to voice such opposition.

Tsukabe said, "If a nuclear accident occurs, we can't recover from it," adding, "I will state my opposition (if I am questioned by the prefectural government)."

Satoshi Mitazono wins governor race in Kagoshima

July 11, 2016

Advocate of halting atomic reactors wins Kagoshima governor race

July 10, 2016 (Mainichi Japan)

KAGOSHIMA (Kyodo) -- Satoshi Mitazono, who has pledged to halt nuclear reactors operating in the prefecture, won the Kagoshima gubernatorial election Sunday, beating incumbent Yuichiro Ito, who agreed to the restart of a nuclear plant in the southwestern prefecture.

The 58-year-old Mitazono, a former TV Asahi Corp. commentator, was backed by the main opposition Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party and some conservatives who typically support the ruling Liberal Democratic Party but were opposed to the incumbent.

Ito, 68, was seeking a fourth four-year term with the support of the LDP and its junior coalition partner Komeito. He admitted defeat.

The fate of Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai nuclear power plant in the prefecture was one of the contentious issues during the election campaign.

The Sendai plant's Nos. 1 and 2 units are the only reactors operating in Japan after the government imposed tougher safety rules following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that triggered meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in northeastern Japan.

Mitazono claimed that the operation of the reactors should be temporarily halted for safety checks following a series of powerful earthquakes that hit the southwestern main island of Kyushu in April, while Ito argued that the plant's safety has been secured.

Mitazono told reporters, "It's the top leadership's role to create momentum toward a nuclear power-free society,"

"We cannot run a nuclear power station unless its safety is ensured," he said.

Voter turnout stood at 56.77 percent, up 12.92 percentage points from the previous election in 2012, according to the prefectural election management committee.

Nuclear-free society advocate set to win Kagoshima governor race

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/07/10/national/politics-diplomacy/nuclear-free-society-advocate-set-win-kagoshima-governor-race/#.V4Na4aJdeou>

Kyodo

- Jul 10, 2016

KAGOSHIMA – Anti-nuclear advocate Satoshi Mitazono was heading for victory in the Kagoshima gubernatorial race Sunday, beating incumbent Yuichiro Ito, who agreed to the resumption of reactors at a power plant in the prefecture, a projection showed.

The 58-year-old Mitazono is a former TV Asahi Corp. commentator. He ran as an independent backed by the main opposition Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party as well as some conservatives who typically support the ruling Liberal Democratic Party but were opposed to the incumbent.

Ito, 68, with the support of the LDP and its junior coalition partner Komeito, was seeking his fourth four-year term.

One of the contentious issues in the race was the fate of Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Sendai nuclear power plant in the prefecture.

The Sendai plant's No. 1 and No. 2 units are the only reactors operating in the country after the government imposed tougher safety rules following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that triggered meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Mitazono demanded that plant operations be temporarily suspended for safety checks in the wake of a series of strong earthquakes that hit central Kyushu in April, while Ito argued that the plant's safety had been secured.

"We will not activate any reactors the safety of which is not guaranteed," he told reporters on Sunday.

For the 3rd time court rules against Takahama restart

July 12, 2016

Court rules a third time against Takahama reactors

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/07/12/national/court-rules-third-time-takahama-reactors/#.V4TRc6Jdeot>

by Eric Johnston

Staff Writer

OTSU, SHIGA PREF. – The Otsu District Court ruled against Kansai Electric Power Co. for the third time in five months Tuesday, in a decision that will keep its Takahama No. 3 and 4 reactors in Fukui Prefecture shut down indefinitely.

Both sides are now gearing up for an appeal by Kepco to the Osaka High Court, where a decision could come next year, while the plaintiffs are expected to file further suits.

The utility had filed an objection to the Otsu court's March decision, which granted a temporary injunction on the Takahama reactors, forcing Kepco to shut them down about two months after they had been restarted.

The court reaffirmed its decision in June and again made the same ruling on Tuesday after Kepco fought the June decision.

"The utility was not arguing that both reactors were safe based on expert evidence and reasonable safety standards, but that they were safe due to detailed assertions directly related to their safety and prima facie evidence," said presiding Judge Yoshihiko Yamamoto, the same judge who has twice ruled against Kepco. "However, the new safety standards haven't drawn the limits of what dangers should be accepted by society."

Representatives for the plaintiffs welcomed the ruling.

“Once again, the Otsu court has ruled against the safety of restarting the reactors, especially with Lake Biwa nearby, even though Kepco has said it’ll likely appeal to the (Osaka) High Court,” said Yoshinori Tsuji, one of the chief plaintiffs.

The case boiled down to the basic question of what determines adequate safety for a nuclear power plant. It has raised questions about the way the Nuclear Regulation Authority is handling safety inspections for restarts.

Tuesday’s verdict will fuel attempts elsewhere to block reactor restarts. The Otsu plaintiffs said they were preparing to file requests in other local courts for a temporary injunction on restarting the Ikata reactor in Ehime Prefecture, which is expected to take place in the coming weeks.

Court blocks restart of 2 Takahama reactors

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20160712_25/

A district court has issued a fresh injunction to block the restart of 2 reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant in central Japan. It points out that clearing new regulations does not necessarily guarantee the safety of reactors.

The Otsu District Court in Shiga Prefecture issued the injunction on Tuesday for the No.3 and No.4 reactors at the Takahama plant in neighboring Fukui Prefecture.

In March, the court issued an injunction to suspend the operations of the 2 reactors. This was the first court order of its kind in Japan.

The operator, Kansai Electric Power Company, filed an objection to cancel the injunction.

The district court held hearings to consider the opinions of Kansai Electric and residents of Shiga Prefecture.

In Tuesday’s ruling, presiding judge Yoshihiko Yamamoto said the utility had not given an adequate explanation of what caused the 2011 accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

He said that the approval of the Nuclear Regulation Authority, based on the new regulations that were introduced after the Fukushima disaster, will not be sufficient to guarantee the reactors’ safety.

Kansai Electric issued a statement saying that it is disappointed, and it plans to appeal to a higher court. The utility also says it will begin removing nuclear fuel rods from the 2 reactors next month as there is a possibility they will be offline for a long time.

Court again nixes appeal to restart 2 Takahama nuclear reactors

July 12, 2016 (Mainichi Japan)

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20160712/p2g/00m/0dm/067000c>

OTSU, Japan (Kyodo) -- A Japanese court again disallowed the operation of two nuclear reactors Tuesday, rejecting their operator's request to suspend an injunction the same court had issued over the once-reactivated units at the Takahama power plant in Fukui Prefecture, western Japan.

The Otsu District Court's decision, following the injunction issued in March over the Nos. 3 and 4 units at the Kansai Electric Power Co. plant, would continue to legally prevent the Osaka-based utility from restarting operation of the reactors on the Sea of Japan coast about 380 kilometers west of Tokyo.

Kansai Electric plans to appeal the decision to the Osaka High Court, company officials said.

In June, the district court also rejected the plant operator's appeal to temporarily void the effects of the injunction, with public concerns lingering over the restart of nuclear power plants in Japan in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi disaster.

Tuesday's decision was issued under the same presiding judge, Yoshihiko Yamamoto, who made the judgments in March and June.

The March injunction was the first of its kind affecting operating reactors. One of the reactors was taken offline one day after the order. The other reactor was already offline.

The Takahama plant has cleared the post-Fukushima safety regulations, allowing Kansai Electric to reactivate the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors. But their operation was beset with problems.

Kansai Electric has announced it will remove fuels from the two nuclear power reactors in August, even though Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has expressed a desire to ramp up nuclear power generation at home.

Kagoshima Gov. wants Sendai halted for safety checks

July 14, 2016

Kagoshima's new governor vows to halt Sendai nuclear plant for safety checks

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/07/14/national/kagoshimas-new-governor-wants-sendai-uke-plant-halted-faults-evacuation-routes-checked/#.V4fS2qJdeot>

Kyodo

KAGOSHIMA – Incoming Kagoshima Gov. Satoshi Mitazono says he plans to ask Kyushu Electric Power Co. to suspend operation of the Sendai nuclear power plant for safety checks.

In an interview on Wednesday, Mitazono said he will make the request to the utility at a yet to be decided date to examine the effects of powerful earthquakes that hit nearby Kumamoto and Oita prefectures in April.

The former TV commentator was elected Sunday as governor of the only prefecture in Japan with an operating nuclear power plant.

During campaigning, Mitazono pledged to halt its operation.

“I will require Kyushu Electric to temporarily suspend the operation” for a survey of nearby faults and a review of evacuation plans to ensure safety, he said.

“There are many citizens in this prefecture concerned about the nuclear power plant operating after the quakes in Kumamoto,” he said.

Prefectural governors are not authorized to stop the operation of a nuclear reactor, but utilities require local consent to restart them.

Backed by an anti-nuclear camp, Mitazono defeated incumbent Yuichiro Ito, who allowed two reactors at the Sendai complex to be reactivated last year.

Ehime evacuation plans worrying

August 5, 2016

Far-reaching quakes put Ehime’s atomic evacuation plans in doubt

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/08/05/national/far-reaching-quakes-put-ehimes-atomic-evac-plans-doubt/#.V6RrPaJdeos>

by Eric Johnston
Staff Writer



MATSUYAMA, EHIME PREF. – When two earthquakes of magnitude 6.5 and 7.3 struck Kumamoto Prefecture in April, the shock was felt not only in Kumamoto but also about 170 km away, in the small town of Ikata, Ehime Prefecture, home to a nuclear power plant.

For years, residents had been told that the Median Tectonic Line, which runs from Kyushu to Honshu and passes just 5 km away from the Ikata plant, was not active and that there was nothing to worry about. After the April quakes, no abnormal atomic activity was reported, but residents are now worried a large quake in the area, followed by tsunami, could not only damage the plant but also make evacuation from the peninsula Ikata lies on impossible.

The restart of Ikata reactor 3, slated for Aug. 12, has put those concerns in sharp focus and raised questions about just how realistic evacuation will be in the event of a natural disaster — especially an earthquake that sends a tsunami churning toward the nearly 124,000 residents living within 30 km of the plant.

“The official evacuation plans assume emergency vehicles will have a certain degree of access to the low-lying roads on the peninsula, which are often only a few meters above sea level. But what happens if the roads are flooded by tsunami or damaged beyond use due to landslides? There are about 5,000 people on the peninsula living on the western side of the Ikata plant who might be cut off from escaping by land to the designated evacuation areas lying east of the plant,” said Tsukasa Wada, an Matsuyama-based antinuclear activist who is fighting to keep the Ikata plant closed.

In granting permission last year to restart Ikata’s No. 3 unit, Ehime Gov. Tokihiro Nakamura dismissed such concerns, saying the rock formations around the plant are strong. But the prefecture has designated 194 areas in the town of Ikata as highly susceptible to landslides.

To get to the Ikata plant from Matsuyama by car or bus also involves passing through a series of tunnels. Tunnel construction experts have testified in past lawsuits involving the plant that many of the tunnels are weak, suggesting that an earthquake could cause cave-ins, rendering them unusable.

The central government and the prefecture are aware that land evacuations alone could prove impossible. So the official plans also include evacuations by air and, most controversially, by sea. The plans assume there is time to evacuate by sea before radiation from the plant spreads, and that ships can dock at nearby ports even if the peninsula’s main access road has been destroyed by a quake, tsunami, or both.

The April quakes in Kumamoto led to fears in neighboring Kagoshima Prefecture about running the two reactors at Kyushu Electric Power Co.’s Sendai plant. That helped fuel the election last month of Gov. Satoshi Mitazono, who is against nuclear power and has said he’ll try to shut down the two Sendai reactors.

But in late July, Ehime Gov. Nakamura insisted that, despite the results in Kagoshima and growing concerns in Ehime, where an opinion poll by the daily Ehime Shimbun in July found 54 percent of respondents opposed to the restart, he had no intention of canceling or postponing it to revisit the issues of the plant’s safety or the evacuation plans.

“The conditions are different in each of the different areas where nuclear power plants are located, as is the age of the reactors in each area and their structure. You can’t compare them. In particular, for the process leading up to restarts, the approach and system is different for each area, with different plans for evacuation,” Nakamura told reporters at a regular press briefing.

But even a Shikoku Electric Power Co. survey in late May and early June of nearly 28,000 households lying within 20 km of the Ikata plant showed that, compared with a similar survey last year, more people were skeptical of safety assurances and fewer were convinced of the need for nuclear power. Shikoku Electric admits that the Kumamoto earthquakes probably influenced this year’s results.

Listen to anti-nuke calls

August 6, 2016

EDITORIAL: If Abe is serious, he should listen in earnest to anti-nuke calls

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201608060027.html>

August 6, 2016 at 16:50 JST

“(We can choose) a future in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known not as the dawn of atomic warfare, but as the start of our own moral awakening.” That was how Barack Obama wound up his 17-minute-long public address during his historic visit to Hiroshima on May 27.

He was the first sitting U.S. president to visit the city leveled by the world's first atomic bombing. The 71st anniversary of that event fell on Aug. 6. Nagasaki suffered the same fate as Hiroshima three days later, on Aug. 9, 1945.

Obama's visit to Hiroshima was a benchmark event. Even so, nuclear stockpiles around the world are still in excess of 15,000 warheads. A world without nuclear weapons remains a distant dream.

Action is needed to carve out the future. In this regard, there are particularly high expectations for the role of Japan, which experienced the ravages of atomic bombings.

But the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are increasingly suspicious of the central government's intentions. In their view, the government seems to be obstructing the global trend for trying to eradicate nuclear weaponry.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who accompanied Obama during his Hiroshima visit, pledged that he would “continue to make incessant efforts” toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons.

But what precisely is he determined to do, we wonder. The key question here is that of a concrete vision.

TOKYO EMBARRASSED BY TALK OF ‘NO FIRST USE’

The Washington Post reported last month that the Obama administration is considering changes in its nuclear policy.

Notably, a declaration of “no first use” is reportedly being weighed as an option. The term refers to a country's pledge that it will not be the first to use nuclear arms unless it comes under nuclear attack from another nation. China and India, among the world's nuclear weapon states, have adopted that policy.

“No first use” is expected to significantly reduce the role of nuclear arms in security policy. It is also believed to be highly effective in urging other nuclear weapon states to engage in nuclear disarmament.

Ten U.S. Democratic senators have called on Obama to declare “no first use.” The mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have sent a letter to Obama to express their support for the potential nuclear policy changes, saying such moves would “mark an important step toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons.”

But Tokyo appears to be embarrassed by this. Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said only that Japan and the United States “should remain closely in touch” over the matter. When the Obama administration reviewed its nuclear policy in 2010, it stopped short of declaring “no first use” out of consideration for Japan and other U.S. allies.

At the United Nations, meantime, there is growing momentum to outlaw nuclear arms, which are inhumane weapons, under international law.

A U.N. working group, which has been discussing the matter since February in Switzerland, is holding its final session this month. The working group's chairman has worked out a draft report that says, “A majority of States expressed support for the commencement of negotiations ... in 2017.”

Japan is one country that is not part of that “majority of States.” Tokyo has reiterated at the working group’s sessions that the time is not ripe for declaring nuclear weapons illegal in view of the current security climate.

Seventy-one years after the A-bombings, the very country that suffered the nuclear attacks is trying to block the trend for nuclear disarmament.

PERSISTENT DEPENDENCE ON NUCLEAR UMBRELLA

The backdrop here is Japan’s dependence on the “nuclear umbrella,” under which it relies on the nuclear arsenal of the United States to deter attacks from other countries.

Tokyo believes Japan must stay under the nuclear umbrella, not the least because it has to face up to China, which is pursuing a rapid military buildup, and to North Korea, which has repeatedly conducted nuclear tests and test-firings of missiles.

No approval can be given to a “no first use” policy and a prospective treaty to ban nuclear weapons, both of which would erode the deterrent potential of the nuclear umbrella, according to Tokyo’s position.

Let us remember, however, that nuclear deterrence theory is a relic of the Cold War period. The government of Japan has not ruled out a possible use of nuclear weapons by the United States. That is broadly at odds with the sentiment of the Japanese public, which does not want a repeat of the ravages of a nuclear attack.

As long as deterrence theory is adhered to, other nuclear weapon states will also stick to their reliance on nuclear arsenals, which means the risk of a nuclear war would never diminish.

It goes without saying that the security climate should be taken into account from a tough viewpoint.

Many experts believe, however, that conventional war potential--basically that of Japan and the United States--alone is functioning as a sufficient deterrent on North Korea and China.

“We must have the courage to escape the logic of fear, and pursue a world without (nuclear weapons),” Obama said in his Hiroshima address.

Kazumi Matsui, the mayor of Hiroshima, cited that passage in his Aug. 6 Peace Declaration, and added, “We need to fill our policymakers with the passion to ... create a security system based on trust and dialogue.”

Courage and passion: These qualities are probably expected from the government of Japan more than anything else. Tokyo should start striving to seek a security policy that does not rely on the nuclear umbrella and begin holding talks with Washington to achieve that goal.

Abe has attended the peace ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki every year. He has also had opportunities to hold dialogue with representatives of A-bomb survivors.

But the residents of Hiroshima and Nagasaki strongly distrust Abe. The prime minister has not only rushed through policies that undermine the pacifist principles of the Constitution, such as lifting Japan’s self-imposed ban on the right to exercise collective self-defense and enacting new security legislation. He has been less than willing to listen to earnest pleas. In 2014, for example, he used the phrase, “It’s a matter of opinion,” to dismiss concerns expressed by an A-bomb survivor.

POIGNANT CALLS FROM A-BOMBED CITIES

The Nagasaki Peace Declaration to be released Aug. 9 is expected to include, for the first time in two years, a demand for enacting a law to set down Japan’s three non-nuclear principles--not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction into Japan, of nuclear weapons.

Sumiteru Taniguchi, an 87-year-old A-bomb survivor, strongly called, during a drafting committee meeting, for the inclusion of that passage.

“Those who never experienced that abominable war are trying to have the (pacifist) Constitution amended,” Taniguchi said. “As a survivor of the A-bomb, I have to continue calling out loud as long as I am alive.”

Poignant calls from the A-bombed cities represent the starting point of efforts to realize a world without nuclear arms. If Abe wishes, as he says he does, to lead initiatives to have nuclear weapons abolished, the first thing he should do is to face up in earnest to the calls of people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and seek out a way to go hand in hand with them.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Aug. 6

Protestors rally at Ikata plant

August 12, 2016

Protest rally staged at Ikata

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20160812_15/

People opposing the restart of a reactor at the Ikata nuclear power plant have staged a protest rally in front of the plant.

More than 100 protesters gathered early Friday morning at the entrance of the plant, operated by Shikoku Electric Power Company. They held flags and banners with anti-nuclear messages.

When the plant's No.3 reactor resumed operations at around 9 AM, they shouted "Stop the operations."

A woman in her 40s from Kagoshima Prefecture said she feels sad, just like she did a year ago when Kagoshima's Sendai nuclear power plant was brought back online.

She said she fears that powerful earthquakes like the ones that hit Kumamoto Prefecture, western Japan, earlier this year could occur around the Ikata plant.

A man in his 60s from Fukui Prefecture, central Japan, said the reactivation of the Ikata reactor is regrettable. He said he hopes the lawsuits filed with district courts will stop its operation.

Montreal Declaration

Montreal Declaration for a Nuclear-Fission-Free World

As citizens of this planet inspired by the *Second Thematic World Social Forum for a Nuclear-Fission-Free World*, conducted in Montreal from August 8 to August 12, 2016, we are collectively calling for a mobilization of civil society around the world to bring about the elimination of all nuclear weapons, to put an end to the continued mass-production of all high-level nuclear wastes by phasing out all nuclear reactors, and to bring to a halt all uranium mining worldwide.

This call goes out to fellow citizens of all countries worldwide who see the need, whether as an individual or as a member of an organization, for a nuclear-fission-free world. We are committed to building a global network of citizens of the world who will work together, using the internet and social media to overcome isolation, to provide mutual support and to coordinate the launching of joint actions for a world free of nuclear fission technology, whether civilian or military.

We will begin by creating communication channels to share information and educational tools on legal, technical, financial, medical, and security-related matters linked to military and non-military nuclear activities. We will pool our resources across national boundaries in a spirit of cooperation, allowing us to contribute to the formulation of a convergent and unified response to counteract the plans of the nuclear establishment that operates on a global scale to multiply civil and military nuclear installations worldwide and to dump, bury and abandon nuclear wastes.

We recognize each nuclear weapon as an instrument of brutal and unsurpassed terror, designed to kill millions of innocent men, women and children at a single stroke. We realize that even a limited nuclear war can provoke sudden extreme climate change on a global scale, crippling agricultural production and threatening the survival of all higher forms of life. We are grimly aware that a nuclear-armed world will surely destroy itself and set in motion a process that will undo four billion years of evolution. We are determined to help guide the world away from the brink of nuclear annihilation.

We recognize each nuclear reactor as a repository of the most pernicious industrial waste ever known; waste so radioactive that it spontaneously melts down if not continually cooled; waste that, when targeted by terrorists or saboteurs, or by conventional warfare, will render large portions of the earth uninhabitable for centuries; waste that contains material that can be used as a nuclear explosive at any time in the future, for thousands of years to come.

We recognize uranium as the key element behind all nuclear weapons and all nuclear reactors, and we endorse the call by the *International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War* and by the *2015 Quebec World Uranium Symposium* for a total global ban on the mining and processing of uranium.

We will use our networks

- to pressure governments everywhere to put an end to nuclear fission
- to expose the dangers associated with the export and transport of nuclear materials and nuclear waste;
- to puncture the myths used to prop up and justify our irrational nuclear addiction;
- to tell the sobering stories of nuclear victims and nuclear refugees;
- to emphasize our moral responsibilities not to burden future generations with a poisonous nuclear legacy;

- to warn governments without nuclear facilities to realize the dangers and avoid becoming enmeshed in this technology;
- to disseminate the findings of engineers, doctors, biologists, ecologists, physicists and concerned citizens having special knowledge and appreciation of nuclear dangers;
- to promote and popularize the wide variety of renewable energy alternatives that are green and sustainable;
- to launch lawsuits and to support whistle-blowers to halt the most egregious examples of nuclear malfeasance;
- to promote non-violent conflict resolution, and
- to denounce the illegal, immoral, and insane obsession with nuclear weapons arsenals.

We invite all people, groups and organizations involved in the effort for a world without nuclear fission and uranium mining, to commit themselves to this effort. We also ask them to endorse this declaration and to transmit it widely in their networks.

This declaration is partly inspired by the Tokyo Appeal issued by the First Thematic World Social Forum for a Nuclear-Free World held in Tokyo and Fukushima in March 2016.

To endorse the declaration send name and e-mail address to ccnr@web.ca

http://www.ccnr.org/declaration_WSF_e_2016.pdf

Montreal Declaration for a Nuclear-Fission-Free World

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Tokyo antinuke tents forcibly removed

August 21, 2016

Forced removal starts of 'protest' tents on ministry grounds

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201608210014.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

After a five-year protest and court battle, government workers began forcibly taking down three tents erected by anti-nuclear protesters on the grounds of the economy ministry in Tokyo at around 3:30 a.m. on Aug. 21.

A barricade was set up in front of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry as the work began. Security guards were stationed outside of the barricaded area, but there were no major problems. The tents had long been a source of frustration to the economy ministry as well as a gathering spot for those wanting to end the use of nuclear energy in Japan.

The work followed a Supreme Court rejection of an appeal by the anti-nuclear demonstrators who occupied the tents.

The tents were erected on Sept. 11, 2011, six months after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered a triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The promotion of nuclear energy is one of the many tasks under the ministry's jurisdiction.

Protesters called for an end to nuclear energy while occupying the tents. The central government initially asked the protesters to leave the ministry grounds because the tents were interfering with ministry work. When the protesters did not budge, the central government filed a lawsuit in March 2013 asking that the tents be forcibly taken down as well as seeking compensation from the leaders of the protest group.

On July 28, the Supreme Court rejected the group's final appeal, allowing the central government to proceed with the forced removal. It also ordered the group to pay a total of about 38 million yen (\$380,000) for using government land as well as a penalty for late payment.

August 21, 2016

Anti-nuke group's tents removed

http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20160821_14/

The Tokyo District Court has removed tents set up by a group of anti-nuclear activists on the premises of the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry in Tokyo.

The ministry oversees the country's nuclear power industry.

The group set up the tents 6 months after the March 2011 nuclear accident in Fukushima as a base for their activities calling for nuclear power to be abolished.

The government filed a suit with the court, asserting that the group was illegally occupying state-owned property.

It demanded that the group remove the tents and pay for the use of the property.

The court approved the government's demands this month.

On early Sunday morning, members of the group were told to leave and police officers kept the area off-limits for about an hour and a half while the tents were completely removed.

The group later staged a rally to call on the ministry to step up measures to phase out nuclear power.

The leader of the group, Taro Fuchikami, says the anti-nuclear movement must continue.

He said the group will continue sit-in protests in front of the ministry building.

See also :

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/08/21/national/anti-nuclear-activists-tents-forcibly-removed-economy-ministry-premises-years-long-battle/>

Protestors in Niigata

September 4, 2016

By YUKO MATSUURA/ Staff Writer

Groups fear no nuclear debate in Niigata governor's race

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201609040026.html>



Participants in an anti-nuclear gathering in Kashiwazaki, Niigata Prefecture, raise placards demanding the abolition of nuclear power plants on Sept. 3. (Yuko Matsuura)

NIIGATA--Anti-nuclear groups are pleading with Niigata Governor Hirohiko Izumida to rescind his decision not to run for re-election, seeing him as the "last bastion" to block the restart of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant.

The groups fear that the absence of Izumida in the Oct. 16 Niigata gubernatorial election, whose official campaigning starts on Sept. 29, will cause a dearth in debate among candidates on the safety of the multiple-reactor nuclear plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co. in the prefecture.

"Governor (Izumida) is not aware of his value," said Kunio Ueno, 66, secretary-general of the organizing committee for a gathering of anti-nuclear groups held in Kashiwazaki on Sept. 3.

Eighteen groups, based in and outside Niigata Prefecture, set up the organizing committee for the gathering and demanded the decommissioning of reactors at the plant.

"We will not allow candidates in the gubernatorial election to conceal a point of contention," their declaration read. "We will make the issue of the nuclear power plant the biggest point of contention."

Outside the site of the gathering, several citizens groups collected signatures to ask Izumida to run in the election.

On Aug. 30, Izumida, 53, who is in his third term as Niigata governor, announced he will not seek re-election, citing a report in a local newspaper that was not related to the nuclear issue.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority is currently conducting screenings toward the restart of reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant.

But Izumida has insisted that the causes of the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, also operated by TEPCO, must be verified before reactor operations can resume in his prefecture.

As of now, only Tamio Mori, 67, mayor of Nagaoka in Niigata Prefecture, has announced he will run in the governor's race.

On the issue of whether to restart the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant, Mori has only said, "I will strictly examine it based on protecting the security and safety of people in the prefecture."

About 1,300 people took part in the Sept. 3 gathering.

Sayaka Sakazume, 32, of Niigata city, said: "It will be a problem for me if there are no candidates I can vote for based on my thoughts against the reactor restarts. I want a political situation in which we can choose a candidate."



Participants in an anti-nuclear gathering in Kashiwazaki, Niigata Prefecture, raise placards demanding the abolition of nuclear power plants on Sept. 3. (Yuko Matsuura)

Koizumi's anti-nuclear conviction



September 7, 2016

Despite dwindling momentum, Koizumi pursues anti-nuclear goals

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/09/07/national/politics-diplomacy/despite-dwindling-momentum-koizumi-pursues-anti-nuclear-goals/#.V8_1vDVdeos

by Ayako Mie

Staff Writer

While Japan's once-charged anti-nuclear movement struggles to retain its momentum five years after the 2011 Fukushima catastrophe, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi remains doggedly determined to attain his goal of ending the country's reliance on atomic energy.

On Wednesday, he renewed his pledge to help ill U.S. veterans whose conditions they claim are linked to the release of radioactive plumes from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

Koizumi, who is opposed to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's pro-nuclear stance, says Japan can be put on a sustainable path without atomic power.

"The nuclear power industry says safety is their top priority, but profit is in fact what comes first,"

Koizumi told an audience of more than 180 who had gathered for his news conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo. "Japan can grow if the country relies more renewable energy."

As part of his anti-nuclear push, the 74-year-old former leader set up a fund in July to help U.S. sailors with conditions such as leukemia that they say was caused by radioactive fallout from Fukushima No. 1. He said the fund has raised about ¥40 million so far, with a goal of topping ¥100 million by next March 31.

In May, Koizumi visited Carlsbad, California, to speak to several veterans with health conditions who had taken part in Operation Tomodachi while aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan. Those veterans had provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the Tohoku region after quake and tsunami of March 11, 2011, at the request of the Japanese government.

“After talking to the sailors, I thought it would not be enough for me to simply say ‘I’m sorry’ and leave,” Koizumi said, explaining the impetus for setting up the fund. “Words alone would not be enough and I thought that I had to do something.”

Currently, about 400 U.S. veterans are taking part in a class-action lawsuit in California against Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc., operator of the stricken plant. The lawsuit says that some suffer from leukemia, testicular cancer and thyroid problems, or have experienced rectal and gynecological bleeding.

However, a 2014 report by the U.S. Defense Department determined that there were no causal relationship between radiation exposure during Operation Tomodachi and their illnesses.

Koizumi noted that while expressing sympathy for the veterans, a Foreign Ministry official had even said that there was nothing the Japanese government could do.

“I’m not a doctor, but using common sense one can infer their conditions were caused by radiation, since strong and healthy sailors just don’t find tumors or suffer from conditions like nasal hemorrhages,” Koizumi said.

He was a backer of nuclear power while leader between 2001 and 2006.

But Fukushima changed all that.

After the disaster, he became one of the most outspoken opponents of atomic energy, calling the often-repeated mantra of “clean, safe, cheap” nuclear power a lie. With the shift, he set up a foundation with former Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa in 2014 to call for an immediate phasing out of nuclear power to be replaced with a renewable energy policy.

Yet, Abe’s government sees nuclear energy as a key plank in his bid to export infrastructure and hopes to restart the nation’s reactors so that nuclear can supply 20 to 22 percent of Japan’s electricity by 2030.

Currently, two reactors at the Sendai power plant in Kagoshima Prefecture and one reactor at the Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture are operating.

On Wednesday a request by Kagoshima Gov. Satoshi Mitazono to suspend power generation at the Sendai plant was snubbed by operator Kyushu Electric Power Co.

Mass antinuke rally in Tokyo

September 23, 2016

Anti-nuclear rally calls for more than just a Monju shutdown

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201609230047.html>

By RYUJI KUDO/ Staff Writer



Anti-nuclear demonstrators hoist placards against nuclear power at a mass rally in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park on Sept. 22. (Ryuji Kudo)

Thousands of anti-nuclear demonstrators gathered in Tokyo on Sept. 22 to demand the government go beyond decommissioning the troubled Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor and abandon its plans to restart other nuclear power plants.

"We definitely don't need the money-sucking and dangerous Monju," said Hisae Sawachi, a writer and a member of the organizing committee of the demonstration, which took place under the banner "No nukes, No war." "Why don't government officials have the courage to close down all the other nuclear power plants?"

The rally, at Yoyogi Park in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, followed the government's decision this week to unplug the reactor, which has hardly generated any electricity despite the more than 1 trillion yen (\$9.9 billion) spent on it over two decades.

Masaichi Miyashita, who heads the secretariat of an anti-nuclear group in Fukui Prefecture, told the rally that officials in Tsuruga in the prefecture, where the reactor is situated, are opposed to the government decision to decommission the reactor and want to keep it.

"I wonder how local leaders calling for the continuation of the Monju program consider the health and lives of residents," he said. "I would like you, demonstrators, to continue to demand the decommissioning of Monju by pressuring the government not to waste taxpayers' money."

An estimated 9,500 people attended the rally, according to the organizer, which identifies itself as a citizens' group that is collecting 10 million signatures for a petition to say "sayonara" to nuclear power. Satoshi Kamata, a journalist who has written about the nuclear industry and a member of the committee, said the government should phase out the entire nuclear program.

"Unplugging Monju is just a starting point in ending Japan's nuclear fuel recycling policy and the restart of nuclear power plants, as well as in changing the course of the nation's nuclear power policy," he said.

Where is the truth?

September 24 2016

Canada activist found guilty of harassing scientists over Fukushima fallout

http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/09/23/national/crime-legal/canada-activist-found-guilty-harassing-scientists-fukushima-fallout/#.V-Yv_DVdeos

by Alastair Wanklyn
Staff Writer

A Canadian environmental activist who waged a sustained online campaign against two prominent marine scientists was found guilty of criminal harassment by a court in Victoria, British Columbia, on Thursday. The court heard that Dana Durnford, 54, threatened violence against **Jay Cullen, of the University of Victoria, and Ken Buesseler, of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts**, and accused them of underplaying the extent of damage to Pacific ecosystems from the 2011 Fukushima disaster. Durnford was sentenced to three years' probation.

"I expected and was pleased with the judge's ruling," Cullen said after the verdict. "Mr. Durnford, on many occasions, threatened physical violence against scientists and others who have focused their attention and expertise to better understand how the Fukushima nuclear disaster has affected the marine environment and human health. Such behavior is criminal."

Buesseler also welcomed the ruling. Threatening violence is "never an appropriate response to scientific findings you might disagree with," he said.

Durnford, a former professional diver, has a large online presence.

His unscripted videos, recorded in a mock television studio, present what he purports to be research that contradicts mainstream scientific findings.

He alleges collusion between the global scientific establishment and the nuclear industry over the dangers presented by the nuclear industry and, in particular, the Fukushima debacle.

Durnford, of Powell River, British Columbia, did not respond to phone calls and an email for comment on Friday.

In a video apparently recorded shortly before the trial began this week, he alluded to trouble meeting court-related costs.

"They bankrupted us in these court proceedings in order to silence us," he told viewers.

Taiwan: No more nukes by 2025

October 23, 2016

Taiwan to end nuclear power generation in 2025

By SATOSHI UKAI/ Correspondent



Taiwan's fourth nuclear power plant in New Taipei City in the northern part of the island. Its construction has been suspended due to an anti-nuclear movement that has intensified since the Fukushima nuclear disaster. (Asahi Shimbun file photo)

TAIPEI--In a rare move for power-hungry Asia, the Taiwanese government has decided to abolish nuclear power generation by 2025 to meet the public's demand for a nuclear-free society following the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Taiwan's Executive Yuan, equivalent to the Cabinet in Japan, approved revisions to the electricity business law, which aim to promote the private-sector's participation in renewable energy projects, on Oct. 20.

"Revising the law shows our determination to promote the move toward the abolition of nuclear power generation and change the ratios of electricity sources," said President Tsai Ing-wen.

The government plans to start deliberations on the revised bill in the Legislative Yuan, or the parliament, in the near future, with the goal of passing it within this year.

Movements toward a nuclear-free society are active in Europe. For example, Germany has decided to abolish nuclear power generation by 2022.

On the other hand, China and India are increasing nuclear power generation to meet the growing demand for electricity. In Taiwan, nuclear power accounted for 14.1 percent of all the electricity generated in 2015. At present, three nuclear power plants are operating.

However, the March 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant heightened public opinion against nuclear power generation. In response to the sentiment, Tsai, who assumed the presidency in May with a vow of establishing a nuclear-free society, led the government's effort to abolish nuclear power.

Like Japan, Taiwan is hit by many earthquakes. The three nuclear power plants currently in operation will reach their service lives of 40 years by 2025. The revised bill will clearly stipulate that operations of all the nuclear plants will be suspended by that year. The stipulation will close the possible extension of their operations.

The government is looking to solar power and wind power as the pillars of renewable energies. It aims to increase their total ratio among all electricity sources from the current 4 percent to 20 percent in 2025.

However, meeting the goal assumes that electricity generated by solar power will increase 24-fold in 10 years. Because of that, some people harbor doubts on the viability of the plan.

“A hurdle to overcome to achieve the goal is very high,” said an electric power industry source.

First day in office

October 26, 2016

On first day in office, new Niigata governor again rejects early reactor restart

JJI

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/10/26/national/first-day-office-new-niigata-governor-rejects-early-reactor-restart/#.WBDMp8ldeos>

NIIGATA – On his first day in office, Niigata Gov. Ryuichi Yoneyama reiterated his opposition to an early restart of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant.

“I can’t discuss (the matter) while the investigation is still in progress,” Yoneyama told a news conference Tuesday, referring to the probe into the March 2011 meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

“I can’t accept a resumption of the plant’s operation under what I understand as the current situation,” he said.

Having never before held public office, Yoneyama won a landslide victory on Oct. 16. His campaign stressed his negative stance toward the restart of the power plant that straddles the village of Kariwa and the city of Kashiwazaki.

Operated by Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc., it is the biggest nuclear power plant in the world.

Supported by three opposition parties — the Japanese Communist Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party — Yoneyama defeated a candidate backed by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner Komeito.

At his inaugural news conference, Yoneyama expressed his intention to “thoroughly investigate” the Fukushima crisis.

He referred to Tepco’s failure to quickly disclose the meltdowns at Fukushima No. 1, which a joint committee of the Niigata Prefectural Government and the company is currently investigating.

The matter will be “scrutinized to an extent at which guidelines to judge (nuclear plant) safety can be drawn up,” Yoneyama said, expressing his hope of hashing out a conclusion by the end of his four-year term.

He said he hopes to hold talks with the central government and Tepco soon on the possible restart. “It’s important to confirm each other’s positions,” he observed.

At a news conference in Tokyo, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said there is no change in the central government’s policy of pursuing a restart of any reactor that has passed a Nuclear Regulation Authority safety examination.

“We hope to secure local support while listening sufficiently to the new governor,” Suga said.

Taiwan to phase out nukes in 9 years

October 31, 2016

EDITORIAL: Taiwan bows to public opinion in pulling plug on nuclear power

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201610310023.html>

Taiwan has taken a step toward phasing out nuclear power generation in nine years.

The move represents Taiwan's response to the lessons it has learned by thinking seriously about the catastrophic nuclear accident that occurred in 2011 at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The undertaking deserves to be monitored carefully.

Like Japan, Taiwan is poor in natural resources. It introduced nuclear power generation in the 1970s amid an increasingly tense standoff with China and growing pressure from being isolated internationally.

Currently, three nuclear power plants are in operation in Taiwan.

Also like Japan, Taiwan is prone to earthquakes and other natural disasters.

The Fukushima nuclear disaster triggered a massive wave of action by citizens calling for the termination of nuclear power generation.

The trend has also been fueled by a series of problems that plagued the island's fourth nuclear reactor, which was under construction, intensifying public distrust of the safety of nuclear power.

In response to the public concerns about atomic energy, Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party was elected Taiwanese president in January on a platform that included a vow to build a nuclear-free society as a key plank.

Tsai's DPP won a majority of the Legislative Yuan in the legislative poll held simultaneously, clearing the way for the new leader to pursue her political agenda. Necessary revisions to the related law are expected to pass the legislature by the end of this year.

The three nuclear plants account for 14 percent of Taiwan's power generation capacity. Bringing the production of electricity at these plants down to zero in just nine years may be a tough challenge for the island.

Many Taiwanese consumers are voicing concerns about a possible power shortage and spikes in electricity bills.

But Economic Affairs Minister Chih-Kung Lee has argued for the initiative by saying people should focus on the question of what kind of energy policy is needed to avoid leaving the problem of radioactive waste to their offspring.

His weighty comment raises crucial and straightforward questions about nuclear power generation.

Taiwan operates a facility to store low-level radioactive waste from the nuclear power plants in a remote island. But local residents have been opposing the operation of the facility.

To compensate for the loss of nuclear power, Taipei plans to raise the share of renewable energy, mainly solar and wind power, in overall electricity production to 20 percent from the current 4 percent.

The Tsai administration's move to set a clear timetable for ending the production of electricity using atomic energy will make it easier for industries to make strategic responses to the policy shift. This is raising strong expectations for job creation in related industrial areas.

A similar situation is unfolding in Germany, which has decided to abolish nuclear power generation by 2022.

Taiwanese companies have an international reputation for their excellent ability to quickly take in new technologies and develop them into popular products.

There is much room for them to upgrade their power-saving expertise. This offers business opportunities also for Japanese companies with close ties to Taiwanese businesses.

Nuclear power generation was introduced into Taiwan by the autocratic regime of the Kuomintang, or the Nationalist Party. In contrast, the DPP has been espousing an anti-nuclear policy and has no special interest ties with the power industry.

Consequently, the transfer of power from the Kuomintang to the DPP has led directly to this policy shift. In Taiwanese society, a majority of people have taken a dim view of nuclear power generation. Even the previous Kuomintang government froze the construction of the fourth nuclear plant under pressure from strong public opposition.

Taiwan's decision to pull the plug on nuclear power generation is a product of not only strong political leadership. It is also a result of Taiwan's success in translating the will of the people into a specific policy decision.

In Japan, there are strong concerns about the restarts of offline nuclear reactors. This public anxiety was clearly reflected in the outcomes of the recent gubernatorial elections in Kagoshima and Niigata prefectures.

Why, then, is the Japanese government showing no signs of making any major change in its nuclear power policy?

Taiwan's decision inevitably makes us ponder various problems facing Japan.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Oct. 30

Koizumi: Focus on nukes for next election

November 5, 2016

Zero-nuclear policy can lead opposition to victory: Koizumi

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201611050034.html>

By SHINICHI SEKINE/ Staff Writer

NIIGATA--An anti-nuclear stance taken by opposition parties could lift them from their doldrums and defeat the ruling coalition, former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said, pointing to the recent Niigata governor's election.

"We now know that the ruling parties will lose if the opposition parties back a unified candidate and focus on a nuclear-free energy policy in the campaign," Koizumi said at a gathering here on Nov. 4. "The effects of this have not yet surfaced but they are huge."

Koizumi cited the victory by Niigata Governor Ryuichi Yoneyama, who was backed by the opposition Japanese Communist Party, Social Democratic Party and Liberal Party. Running on a plank urging caution about restarting the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in the prefecture, Yoneyama defeated a candidate supported by the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and Komeito.

The former prime minister said Yoneyama's win should be a wake-up call to both ruling and opposition parties to focus on nuclear energy in the next national election.

"If the opposition parties realize the significance of this, the LDP cannot feel complacent," Koizumi told reporters at the gathering. "If the opposition parties change, the LDP will also be forced to change." However, Koizumi scratched his head at **the inability of the largest opposition party, the Democratic Party, to come out clearly against nuclear energy. The party's major backer, Rengo, the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, includes unions made up of employees of electric power companies.**

For that reason, the Democratic Party did not formally support Yoneyama in the Niigata gubernatorial election.

"There are only about half a million votes from labor unions with ties to electric power companies and that support nuclear energy," Koizumi told reporters. "I wonder why the party does not make the effort to win 5 million or 50 million votes."

Sendai No.1 goes back online (2)

December 9, 2016

Kyushu Electric fires up Kagoshima reactor after governor gives OK

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/12/09/national/kyushu-electric-fires-kagoshima-reactor-governor-gives-grudging-nod/#.WEqg832Dmos>

Kyodo

FUKUOKA – Kyushu Electric Power Co. restarted a nuclear reactor in Kagoshima Prefecture on Thursday after the prefectural governor, who is opposed to nuclear power, effectively permitted the move last week. Reactor No. 1 at the Sendai nuclear power complex is one of five reactors to have been reactivated under stricter safety regulations adopted in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima reactor meltdowns. Following resumption in August 2015, its operation had been suspended for a regular checkup since Oct. 6. The utility pulled out control rods from the reactor at around 9:30 p.m. The reactor is expected to achieve criticality by Friday morning and to start power generation from Sunday. Commercial operation is set to resume from Jan. 6.

Kyushu Electric on Tuesday notified Kagoshima Gov. Satoshi Mitazono of the planned restart of the reactor and was not requested to suspend it this time, it said.

Mitazono, who was elected in July on an anti-nuclear platform, asked the utility in August and September to immediately suspend operation of the plant. Reactor No. 1 came to a halt in October for a regular checkup.

The Sendai complex's reactor No. 2 is scheduled to be suspended for regular checks from Dec. 16 to Feb. 27.

Mitazono had told the prefectural assembly earlier this month that he had no legal power to decide whether to restart the reactor, paving the way for the latest move.

On Thursday, however, Mitazono said that he will take "strong action, regardless of the reactor's operation," if an experts' committee, which he plans to set up to examine safety at the plant, finds any safety problems.

Some 30 local residents and anti-nuclear group members gathered in front of the Sendai plant Thursday morning to protest the reactivation.

December 9, 2016

Sendai nuclear reactor restarts as governor stays quiet

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201612090049.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

SATSUMA-SENDAI, Kagoshima Prefecture--Kyushu Electric Power Co. restarted a reactor at its nuclear plant here on Dec. 8, drawing protests from anti-nuclear activists and a look of resignation from the man they helped to elect governor.

The procedure to remove control rods to allow nuclear fission in the No. 1 reactor at the Sendai plant started at 9:30 p.m., and the plant is expected to generate electricity for commercial use in early January. The No. 1 reactor had been shut down for maintenance since Oct. 6.

The reactor is the first to be restarted after undergoing a routine checkup based on tighter safety standards adopted in light of the 2011 disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

Groups of protesters, including local residents, rallied against the restart and held placards in front of the Sendai plant Dec. 8.

The resumption of operations was particularly harsh for the anti-nuclear activists because they thought they had elected a leader who would shut down the plant.

But Kagoshima Governor Satoshi Mitazono kept his voice low and avoided giving any direct responses to media questions about the restart.

"The nuclear plant will remain here whether it is restarted or not," Mitazono said earlier on Dec. 8.

The governor also said the prefectural government will soon organize a third-party committee that will examine the safety of the Sendai plant.

During the governor's race in July, Mitazono indicated he would take a tough stance against the Sendai plant.

After he took office, he twice asked Kyushu Electric for an "immediate halt" to plant operations.

But Mitazono later toned down his words, repeatedly saying he has no legal authority to have the reactor restarted or not.

The No. 1 reactor was restarted as scheduled.

(This article was written by Shuhei Shibata and Takeshi Nakashima.)

Koizumi's antinuclear stance

December 31, 2016

See also : <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/SDI201701026164.html>

A Maverick Former Japanese Prime Minister Goes Antinuclear

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/31/world/asia/a-maverick-former-japanese-prime-minister-goes-antinuclear.html?emc=eta1>

By MOTOKO RICHDEC. 31, 2016

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan in September. Although he supported nuclear power during his run as prime minister from 2001 to 2006, Mr. Koizumi now actively opposes it. Credit The Asahi Shimbun, via Getty Images

TOKYO — William Zeller, a petty officer second class in the United States Navy, was one of hundreds of sailors who rushed to provide assistance to Japan after a giant earthquake and tsunami set off a triple meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in 2011. Not long after returning home, he began to feel sick.

Today, he has nerve damage and abnormal bone growths, and blames exposure to radiation during the humanitarian operation conducted by crew members of the aircraft carrier Ronald Reagan. Neither his doctors nor the United States government has endorsed his claim or those of about 400 other sailors who attribute ailments including leukemia and thyroid disease to Fukushima and are suing Tokyo Electric, the operator of the plant.

But one prominent figure is supporting the American sailors: Junichiro Koizumi, the former prime minister of Japan.

Mr. Koizumi, 74, visited a group of the sailors, including Petty Officer Zeller, in San Diego in May, breaking down in tears at a news conference. Over the past several months, he has barnstormed Japan to raise money to help defray some of their medical costs.

The unusual campaign is just the latest example of Mr. Koizumi's transformation in retirement into Japan's most outspoken opponent of nuclear power. Though he supported nuclear power when he served as prime minister from 2001 to 2006, he is now dead set against it and calling for the permanent shutdown of all 54 of Japan's nuclear reactors, which were taken offline after the Fukushima disaster.

"I want to work hard toward my goal that there will be zero nuclear power generation," Mr. Koizumi said in an interview in a Tokyo conference room.

The reversal means going up against his old colleagues in the governing Liberal Democratic Party as well as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who are pushing to get Japan, once dependent for about a third of its energy on nuclear plants, back into the nuclear power business.

That Mr. Koizumi would take a contrarian view is perhaps not surprising. He was once known as "the Destroyer" because he tangled with his own party to push through difficult policy proposals like privatization of the national postal service.

Mr. Koizumi first declared his about-face on nuclear power three years ago, calling for Japan to switch to renewable sources of energy like solar power and arguing that "there is nothing more costly than nuclear power."

After spending the first few years of his retirement out of the public eye, in recent months Mr. Koizumi has become much more vocal about his shift, saying he was moved to do more by the emotional appeal of the sailors he met in San Diego.

Scientists are divided about whether radiation exposure contributed to the sailors' illnesses. The Defense Department, in a report commissioned by Congress, concluded that it was "implausible" that the service members' ailments were related to radiation exposure from Fukushima.

To many political observers, Mr. Koizumi's cause in retirement is in keeping with his unorthodox approach in office, when he captivated Japanese and international audiences with his blunt talk, opposition to the entrenched bureaucracy and passion for Elvis Presley.

Some wonder how much traction he can get with his antinuclear campaign, given the Abe administration's determination to restart the atomic plants and the Liberal Democratic Party's commanding majority in Parliament.

Two reactors are already back online; to meet Mr. Abe's goal of producing one-fifth of the country's electricity from nuclear power within the next 15 years, about 30 of the existing 43 reactors would need to restart. (Eleven reactors have been permanently decommissioned.)

A year after the Fukushima disaster, antinuclear fervor led tens of thousands of demonstrators to take to the streets of Tokyo near the prime minister's residence to register their anger at the government's decision to restart the Ohi power station in western Japan. Public activism has dissipated since then, though polls consistently show that about 60 percent of Japanese voters oppose restarting the plants. "The average Japanese is not that interested in issues of energy," said Daniel P. Aldrich, professor of political science at Northeastern University. "They are antinuclear, but they are not willing to vote the L.D.P. out of office because of its pronuclear stance."

Sustained political protest is rare in Japan, but some analysts say that does not mean the antinuclear movement is doomed to wither.

"People have to carry on with their lives, so only so much direct action can take place," said Koichi Nakano, a political scientist at Sophia University in Tokyo.

Antinuclear activism "may look dormant from appearances, but it's there, like magma," he said. "It's still brewing, and the next trigger might be another big protest or political change."

Some recent signs suggest the movement has gone local. In October, Ryuichi Yoneyama was elected governor in Niigata, the prefecture in central Japan that is home to the world's largest nuclear plant, after campaigning on a promise to fight efforts by Tokyo Electric to restart reactors there.

Like Mr. Koizumi, he is an example of how the antinuclear movement has blurred political allegiances in Japan. Before running for governor, Mr. Yoneyama had run as a Liberal Democratic candidate for Parliament.

Mr. Koizumi, a conservative and former leader of the Liberal Democrats, may have led the way.

"Originally, the nuclear issue was a point of dispute between conservatives and liberals," said Yuichi Kaido, a lawyer and leading antinuclear activist. "But after Mr. Koizumi showed up and said he opposed nuclear power, other conservatives realized they could be against nuclear power."

Since he visited the sailors in San Diego, Mr. Koizumi has traveled around Japan in hopes of raising about \$1 million for a foundation he established with another former prime minister, Morihiro Hosokawa, an independent who has previously been backed by the opposition Democratic Party, to help pay some of the sailors' medical costs.

Mr. Koizumi is not involved in the sailors' lawsuit, now before the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in San Francisco. Tokyo Electric is working to have the case moved to Japan.

Aimee L. Tsujimoto, a Japanese-American freelance journalist, and her husband, Brian Victoria, an American Buddhist priest now living in Kyoto, introduced Mr. Koizumi to the plaintiffs. Petty Officer Zeller, who said he took painkillers and had tried acupuncture and lymph node massages to treat his conditions, said the meeting with Mr. Koizumi was the first time that someone in power had listened to him.

"This is a man where I saw emotion in his face that I have not seen from my own doctors or staff that I work with, or from my own personal government," said Petty Officer Zeller, who works at the Naval Medical Center in San Diego. "Nobody has put the amount of attention that I saw in his eyes listening to each word, not just from me, but from the other sailors who have gone through such severe things healthwise."

Mr. Koizumi, whose signature leonine hairstyle has gone white since his retirement, said that after meeting the sailors in San Diego, he had become convinced of a connection between their health problems and the radiation exposure.

“These sailors are supposed to be very healthy,” he said. “It’s not a normal situation. It is unbelievable that just in four or five years that these healthy sailors would become so sick.”

“I think that both the U.S. and Japanese government have something to hide,” he added.

Many engineers, who argue that Japan needs to reboot its nuclear power network to lower carbon emissions and reduce the country’s dependence on foreign fossil fuels, say Mr. Koizumi’s position is not based on science.

“He is a very dramatic person,” said Takao Kashiwagi, a professor at the International Research Center for Advanced Energy Systems for Sustainability at the Tokyo Institute of Technology. “He does not have so much basic knowledge about nuclear power, only feelings.”

That emotion is evident when Mr. Koizumi speaks about the sailors. Wearing a pale blue gabardine jacket despite Japan’s black-and-gray suit culture, he choked up as he recounted how they had told him that they loved Japan despite what they had gone through since leaving.

“They gave their utmost efforts to help the Japanese people,” he said, pausing to take a deep breath as tears filled his eyes. “I am no longer in government, but I couldn’t just let nothing be done.”

Makiko Inoue contributed reporting.

Niigata governor rejects restart

January 5, 2017

Niigata governor rejects restarts in 1st meet with TEPCO execs

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201701050067.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

NIIGATA--Niigata Governor Ryuichi Yoneyama met Jan. 5 with top executives of Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) for the first time, **reiterating his opposition to restarting the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant.**

“It will be difficult to approve the restart as long as (the causes of) the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant are not verified. In the present circumstances, I cannot accept the restart,” Yoneyama told Fumio Sudo, chairman of Tokyo Electric Power Co. Holdings Inc., and Naomi Hirose, president of the company.

It was the first time for Yoneyama to meet with TEPCO executives since he assumed the post of Niigata governor last October. The talks were held in the Niigata prefectural government office.

Yoneyama, noting that it will take several years for the Niigata prefectural government to verify the causes of the 2011 nuclear disaster, asked the TEPCO executives to provide more information and other forms of cooperation.

In response, Sudo said, “The priority is to hear voices of local residents.”

This seemed to suggest that TEPCO will not restart the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant as long as the Niigata governor continues to resist the move.

A council of experts of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry announced late last year that the costs for dealing with the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster will almost double to 21.5 trillion yen (\$185 billion) from 11 trillion yen initially estimated in 2013.

To help cover the amount, TEPCO planned to restart two reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa to generate 100 billion yen in annual profits. But that now looks difficult, given Yoneyama's firm stance on the issue of restarts.

(This article was written by Yoichi Yonetani and Yuko Matsuura.)

Gov., TEPCO execs discuss restart of nuclear plant

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170105_21/

The governor of Niigata Prefecture has met executives from Tokyo Electric Power Company over restarting a nuclear power plant in the prefecture.

Ryuichi Yoneyama, who took office last October, has taken a cautious stance on restarting the utility's Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant.

Yoneyama has insisted that the plant should not be put back online until after an investigation into the cause of an accident in Fukushima and its effects on human health. He also said verification of the effectiveness of an evacuation plan for a possible nuclear accident must be completed before a resumption.

On Thursday, Yoneyama met TEPCO executives, including Chairman Fumio Sudo and President Naomi Hirose, for the first time after 2 postponements of their meetings.

Sudo said TEPCO is ready to sincerely respond to the governor's calls. He added that as opinions of local people are most important for the company, the harsher the opinions, the better for TEPCO.

Sudo also said the firm wants to reform its current management system.

The governor said he's not sure how long the verification process will take, but assumes it will probably be several years. He expressed determination to do all he can to accomplish the verification.

Imari beef for scholarship students

January 8, 2017

NPO members donate 12 million yen in taxes to anti-nuclear city

By SHINYA HARAGUCHI/ Staff Writer

IMARI, Saga Prefecture--In seeking something scholarship recipients can sink their teeth into, five staff members of a nonprofit organization in Tokyo searched for a worthy recipient of their tax payments.

Impressed with the Imari mayor's anti-nuclear stance, the staffers contributed 12 million yen (about \$102,600) of their tax money to the city government here.

In return, they'll receive about 380 kilograms of delicious Imari beef to distribute to scholarship winners, including many affected by the Kumamoto earthquakes.

The five used the "Furusato nozei" (Hometown tax) system, which allows people to divert part of their local tax payments to their favorite local governments. In return, many of those governments send local specialties to donors.

The NPO, named JBC CSR Fund, a scholarship organization, plans to distribute the meat to 223 high school students, including 129 impacted by the powerful earthquakes in Kumamoto last April.

The NPO gives scholarships to high school students who have academic capabilities but are in financial difficulties due to their family circumstances.

The organization considered presenting the beef it would receive to scholarship recipients by utilizing the Furusato nozei system. In consideration, it chose Imari, a production center of the brand beef.

The NPO decided on the city as its mayor, Yoshikazu Tsukabe, expressed opposition to the restart of the Genkai nuclear power plant in Genkai, Saga Prefecture, in 2016. Imari is located within a 30-kilometer radius of the nuclear plant.

On Jan. 6, Tamotsu Sugunami, a staff member of the office for the fund, visited the Imari government and handed over the documentation for the donation to Tsukabe.

While referring to an interview that ran in the Jan. 3 Asahi Shimbun in which Tsukabe expressed his opposition to the restart, Sugunami complimented the mayor, saying, "We quickly became fans of Imari." In response, Tsukabe said, "I was encouraged, although I tend to be isolated (due to my opposition to the nuclear plant)."

The mayor also said, "Once the nuclear power plant is restarted, it will be difficult to stop again. As the plant's operations are suspended now, it is time to switch to anti-nuclear policies."

He added, "I will deliver delicious Imari beef to high school students (through the NPO)."

Each of the 223 students will be able to enjoy about 1.7 kilograms of beef.

Farewell, Mr.Yablokov



January 10, 2017

<http://bellona.org/news/nuclear-issues/2017-01-alexei-yablokov-grandfather-of-russian-environmentalism-dies-at-83>

Published on January 10, 2017 by Charles Digges

Alexei Yablokov, the towering grandfather of Russian ecology who worked with Bellona to unmask Cold War nuclear dumping practices in the Arctic, has died in Moscow after a long illness. He was 83.

As a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, he was also the lead author of the seminal 2007 book, "Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment."

The book presented the conclusion that the 1986 Chernobyl disaster was responsible for 985,000 premature deaths – the boldest mortality tally to date – by analyzing 6,000 source materials on the accident.

Bellona President Frederic Hauge Tuesday remembered Yablokov as a friend of three decades standing. "He was an inspiration, a great friend and a great scientist, one of the world's most significant environmental heroes," said Hauge. "To know him and to work with him, someone of such cool and keen intellect is a memory we should all take care of and treasure."

Yablokov commanded a broad environmental and political mandate in Russia, and published over 500 papers on biology, ecology, natural conservation and numerous textbooks on each of these subjects. He founded Russia's branch of Greenpeace and was the leader of the Green Russia faction of the Yabloko opposition party.

While serving as environmental advisor to President Boris Yeltsin's from 1989 to 1992, Yablokov published a searing white paper that detailed the gravity of the radiological threat posed by dumped military reactors and scuttled nuclear submarines in the Arctic.

The catalogue of waste dumped at sea by the Soviets, includes some 17,000 containers of radioactive waste, 19 ships containing radioactive waste, 14 nuclear reactors, including five that still contain spent nuclear fuel; 735 other pieces of radioactively contaminated heavy machinery, and the K-27 nuclear submarine with its two reactors loaded with nuclear fuel.

Yablokov's white paper spearheaded an epoch of environmental openness that led to more than \$3 billion in international aid to Russia to clean up 200 decommissioned submarines and to secure decades of military nuclear waste.

The paper's findings dovetailed an early Bellona report in 1992 on radioactive waste dumped by the Russian Navy in the Kara Sea.

Hauge said that Yablokov was "the first person in a position of power in Russia who was brave enough to step forward and support our conclusions."

"He helped open serious discussion about what was a Chernobyl in slow motion," said Hauge.

The partnership became critical. In 1995, Bellona's Alexander Nikitin was charged with treason for his contribution to a report expanding on Bellona's conclusions about nuclear dangers in the Arctic. The report was called "The Russian Northern Fleet: Source of Radioactive Contamination."

Throughout the endless hearings leading up to Nikitin's eventual acquittal, Hauge said Yablokov's "calm, collected" knowledge of the Russian constitution helped guide the defense.

"His coolness during the Nikitin case was remarkable," said Hauge on Tuesday. "He really emphasized that the constitution was the way to Nikitin's acquittal."

In 2000, Russia's Supreme Court agreed, and acquitted Nikitin on all counts, making him the first person to ever fight a treason charge in Russia and win.

Yablokov was a constant luminary at Bellona presentations in Russia, the European Union, the United States and Norway, most recently presenting his 2007 book in Oslo on the 30th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster.

He was also a tireless defender of environmental activists in Russia, suggesting at a 2014 Bellona conference in St. Petersburg that ecological groups should publish a list of those government officials who harass them.

"We must constantly support our comrades who have been forced to leave the country or who have ended up in jail on account of their environmental activism," he told the conference.

That same year, Yablokov championed the presentation of a report on environmental violations that took place at Russia's showcase Winter Olympics in Sochi.

Yablokov arranged for activists from the Environmental Watch on the Northern Caucasus – many of whom were jailed, exiled or otherwise harassed into silence – to present their shocking report on Olympic environmental corruption in Moscow when every other venue had turned them away.

"He was a friend and advisor to us from the beginning and in a large part we owe the success of our Russian work to his steady advice and guidance," said Hauge.

Yablokov's death was mourned across the spectrum in Moscow. Igor Chestin, head of the WWF called Yablokov Russia's "environmental knight."

Valery Borschsev, Yablokov's colleague in the human rights faction of the Yabloko party said of him that "he was a person on whom the authorities had no influence."

Charles Digges

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Taiwan passes law to end nukes generation by 2025

January 12, 2017

Taiwan passes bill to end nuclear power by 2025

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170112_02/

Taiwan's parliament has amended a law to terminate nuclear power generation by 2025.

Three nuclear power stations are operating in Taiwan, accounting for 16 percent of the island's power generation in 2015.

But with increased anti-nuclear opinion following the 2011 accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in Japan, Tsai Ing-wen won the presidential election with a pledge to phase out nuclear power.

Her administration submitted amendments to the electricity act to end the use of nuclear power by 2025.

The legislature passed the amendments on Wednesday.

The amendments call for greater use of renewable energy resources, such as solar and wind energy, and allow private companies to sell electricity to the main utility company.

Taiwan's administration wants to raise the percentage of renewable energy from the current 4 percent to 20 percent.

But critics say the end of nuclear power is likely to destabilize energy supply and raise utility charges.

Antinuke "arsonist"

January 17, 2017

Shrub fire outside METI leads to arrest of anti-nuclear activist

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/01/17/national/shrub-fire-outside-meti-building-leads-arrest-anti-nuclear-activist-78/#.WH4I332Dmos>

Kyodo

Shrubbery outside the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry was set on fire, scorching the wall of a nearby subway station building, police said.

They arrested a **78-year-old anti-nuclear activist** for allegedly starting the blaze Monday and damaging private property.

The suspect, Taichi Masakiyo, heads a citizens' group that opposes the use of nuclear power.

His group was camping out on the ministry's grounds in central Tokyo from the 2011 start of the Fukushima nuclear crisis until they were booted out last summer. METI promotes the nuclear power industry.

The fire left a burn mark measuring 15 cm by 1 meter on the wall of the surface building for Kasumigaseki Station. The shrubbery is maintained by subway operator Tokyo Metro Co.

According to the police, Masakiyo's anti-nuclear group had been maintaining three tents on METI property.

Last August, the tents were removed by Tokyo District Court officials after the Supreme Court ruled in July that the group must strike the tents.

The group has continued its protest activity.

Strong opposition forces reduction of radiation limit



Black bags containing radioactively contaminated soil are seen piled up at a temporary storage site in Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, in this June 2016 file photo. (Mainichi)

February 6, 2017

Radiation limit for contaminated soil in reuse experiment lowered after local opposition

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170206/p2a/00m/0na/009000c>

The radiation limit for soil contaminated by the Fukushima nuclear disaster in an experiment to reuse it in construction was **lowered from 8,000 becquerels per kilogram to 3,000 becquerels per kilogram** after strong opposition from a local mayor, it has been learned.

- **【Related】** Nuclear watchdog questions Environment Ministry's plan to reuse radioactive soil
- **【Related】** Environment Ministry deleted some of its remarks from minutes on contaminated soil meet
- **【Related】** Reuse of radioactive soil feared to trigger illegal dumping

The experiment is to be carried out at a temporary storage site in Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, where around 1,000 bags of contaminated soil will be opened, made into construction foundations, and their radiation levels measured. The experiment will be done to check, among other things, whether the radiation exposure dose remains at the yearly limit of 1 millisievert or less. The experiment will cost around 500 million yen. The results are expected to be put together next fiscal year or later.

From soon after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, municipalities including Minamisoma asked the national government to separate out lower-radiation level concrete and other debris for reuse in things like groundwork for coastal forests used to defend against tsunami. At first, the Ministry of the Environment was negative about this, but in December 2011 the ministry allowed such reuse for debris with a limit of 3,000 becquerels per kilogram. According to documents released in response to a release of information request made by the Mainichi Shimbun, some 350,000 metric tons of this kind of debris have been used in Minamisoma and the towns of Namie and Naraha in projects such as groundwork for coastal forests.

Then in June last year, the Ministry of the Environment decided on a policy of reusing contaminated soil with 8,000 becquerels or less per kilogram in structures such as soil foundations for public works projects.

The same month, Minamisoma's Mayor Katsunobu Sakurai visited then vice-minister of the environment Soichiro Seki, where he questioned Seki about the 3,000 becquerel limit that had been used until being replaced by the 8,000 becquerel limit. Sakurai reportedly called for the 3,000 becquerel limit to be used in the upcoming experiment in Minamisoma.

Sakurai says, "If they don't use the 3,000 becquerel limit it is inconsistent. It doesn't make sense for a ministry that is supposed to protect the environment to relax the standards it has set."

The ministry confirmed to the Mainichi Shimbun that the experiment will only use soil up to the 3,000 becquerel limit, and said that the soil used will on average contain about 2,000 becquerels per kilogram.

Court rejects injunction against Ehime reactor

March 30, 2017

Court refuses injunction against reactor

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170330_25/

A Japanese court has turned down a request by residents for a halt to operations of a nuclear reactor in western Japan.

The Hiroshima District Court ruled on Thursday that local residents are in no specific danger of suffering serious radiation damage from the No. 3 reactor at the Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture.

4 people were asking for an injunction, saying the reactor is at risk of a serious accident from a major earthquake.

The reactor's operator, Shikoku Electric Power Company, rejected their concerns, saying it took safety measures based on the maximum size of a possible quake predicted for the area.

Presiding Judge Shigeyuki Yoshioka said the firm worked out its assessment based on a meticulous

geological survey.

The judge ruled that there is nothing unreasonable about the Nuclear Regulation Authority's decision that the reactor meets its requirements.

The reactor was restarted last August after passing scrutiny by the agency based on stricter requirements introduced following the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident.

One of the four residents, Kenta Tsunasaki, called the court's decision regrettable. He said he will keep speaking out against nuclear stations.

Shikoku Electric Power Company said in a statement that the court's decision is reasonable. The firm said it will keep working to ensure safety.

District court rejects request to temporarily halt Ikata nuke plant

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201703300062.html>

By YUKI KUBOTA/ Staff Writer
March 30, 2017 at 18:35 JST

HIROSHIMA--The district court here on March 30 rejected a request for a temporary injunction halting operations of the No. 3 reactor at the Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture, upholding the operator's anti-seismic designs.

The main point of contention in the closed court sessions was if the basic earthquake ground motion figure used by Shikoku Electric Power Co., the plant operator, was appropriate as the basis for its anti-seismic design for the reactor.

The four plaintiffs, who are residents of Hiroshima and Matsuyama, argued that the Ikata plant is located in the region that is vulnerable to a potentially massive Nankai Trough earthquake. The plant also faces a second quake risk because it is located close to the Median Tectonic Line, the longest fault system in Japan. Based on those circumstances, the plaintiffs argued that the maximum 650 gals, a measure of ground acceleration, used by Shikoku Electric as the basic earthquake ground motion, was an underestimation when compared to the figures used for safety inspections of other nuclear plants that have been made stricter following the 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

However, the Hiroshima District Court ruled that Shikoku Electric used reliable measures in calculating the basic earthquake ground motion. The court also ruled that there were no irrational points in the decision made by the NRA to approve the safety screening for the Ikata reactor based on the new standards.

The temporary injunction request, filed on March 11, 2016, the fifth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake, was rejected because the court ruled that the rights of the plaintiffs were not likely to be violated by the safety measures.

The ruling follows a decision on March 28 by the Osaka High Court that overturned a ruling in March 2016 by the Otsu District Court that issued a temporary injunction against the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Other residents have submitted requests for similar temporary injunctions against the Ikata plant in the Matsuyama and Oita district courts as well as the Iwakuni branch of the Yamaguchi District Court. The plaintiffs in the Hiroshima case have also filed a separate lawsuit with the Hiroshima District Court seeking to halt operations of the No. 1 to No. 3 reactors at the Ikata plant. No ruling has yet been made on that lawsuit.

Japan court dismisses request to halt reactor in Ehime

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170330/p2g/00m/0dm/072000c>

March 30, 2017 (Mainichi Japan)

HIROSHIMA (Kyodo) -- A Japanese district court Thursday dismissed a request from local residents to order the halt of a nuclear reactor, which restarted last year, at the Ikata power plant in western Japan. The decision by the Hiroshima District Court came two days after the Osaka High Court revoked a lower court order halting two reactors at the Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture. In that case, the high court accepted an appeal by the plant's operator against the first injunction ever issued in Japan to stop an operating reactor.

The No. 3 reactor is one of only three of Japan's 42 commercial reactors nationwide now operating. The two others are the Nos. 1 and 2 reactors at Kyushu Electric's Sendai plant in Kagoshima Prefecture, southwestern Japan.

In response to Thursday's ruling, the plaintiffs plan to appeal the decision to the Hiroshima High Court, while Shikoku Electric Power Co. welcomed the ruling which supported its claim that it had ensured safe operation of the reactor on the opposite side of the Seto Inland Sea from Hiroshima.

Shikoku Electric has been operating the reactor since last August.

In the ruling, Presiding Judge Shigeyuki Yoshioka said there were "no irrationalities" in stricter safety regulations introduced after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

The court said quake and tsunami estimates by Shikoku Electric were appropriately set based on the safety regulations.

The court said there is a need to prudently review the rationality of the quake estimate. But it said such highly technical matters should be examined by seismologists and officials of the Nuclear Regulation Authority, and not determined by courts.

The most contentious points in the case included whether the post-Fukushima nuclear regulations set by the regulatory body are appropriate, and whether the estimate of seismic ground motion, a key factor in a reactor's quake-resistance design, was credible.

During the court hearings, the plaintiffs argued that Shikoku Electric underestimated the potential magnitude of an earthquake that could hit the plant, which lies above the epicenter of the anticipated Nankai Trough mega-quake.

Amid widespread concern about the safety of nuclear power in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima meltdown, four residents of Matsuyama, Ehime Prefecture, and the city of Hiroshima, which lies about 100 kilometers from the plant, filed a request with the Hiroshima court in March last year, seeking an order to halt the No. 3 reactor.

If the Ikata plant were to be severely damaged like the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant was in 2011, nuclear substances could spread and contaminate the Seto Inland Sea, affecting Hiroshima on the other side of the sea, the plaintiffs asserted.

Supporters expressed their anger over the ruling, calling it "unjust" and saying that coming from the atomic-bombed city of Hiroshima, they will "not give up" the fight.

Similar lawsuits and other injunctions seeking suspension of the No. 3 reactor at the Ikata plant have been filed with other district courts in the nearby city of Matsuyama, Yamaguchi, which lies southwest of Hiroshima, and Oita, which lies to the west of Ikata.

Takahama: Lawyers not to appeal

April 5, 2017

Residents near Takahama nuke plant to focus on main lawsuit after setback

<http://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170405/p2a/00m/0na/002000c>

OTSU -- Lawyers for Shiga Prefecture residents who were seeking a provisional injunction to suspend operations at the idled Takahama Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture have decided not to appeal a high court decision dismissing their petition to the Supreme Court.

- **【Related】** High court backs restart of halted Takahama reactors
- **【Related】** Crane falls on Takahama nuke plant buildings amid storm warning
- **【Related】** Community near nuke plant adopts statement against extending 40-year reactor rule

The lawyers explained that they will rather concentrate on a main lawsuit that the residents filed with the Otsu District Court seeking a ban on operations at the Takahama plant operated by Kansai Electric Power Co.

The decision handed down by the Osaka High Court on March 28, which overturned a provisional injunction by the lower court banning operations at the plant, was finalized on April 4.

About 30 residents of Shiga Prefecture living within 70 kilometers from the atomic power station filed the petition with the district court, which then issued a provisional injunction in March last year banning operations at the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the plant.

However, the Osaka High Court overturned the injunction and gave the green light to operations at the plant on the grounds that it cannot be deemed that the power station lacks safety measures.

According to lawyers for the residents, concerns have been raised that a decision to be handed down by the Supreme Court could have an impact on other similar lawsuits.

Protest at Takahama plant

May 8, 2017

About 200 people protest restarting of Fukui nuclear reactor outside plant

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170508/p2a/00m/0na/006000c#cxrecs_s

TAKAHAMA, Fukui -- Approximately 200 people protested outside the gates of Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO)'s Takahama Nuclear Power Plant here on May 7, to voice their opposition to the planned restarting of the plant's No. 4 reactor in mid-May.

- **【Related】** Utility seeks to restart two reactors in Fukui from mid-May
- **【Related】** High court backs restart of halted Takahama reactors

As police officers patrolled outside the gates from the morning onward, anti-nuclear protesters from groups based in Fukui Prefecture and the Kansai region turned up from cities such as Kyoto and Kobe, with some holding placards.

From about midday onward, the protesters began to shout out slogans such as "An earthquake-prone country like Japan does not need nuclear plants," and "We are against the restarting (of the reactor)," while beating small drums. Also, a letter demanding a stop to the restarting of operations was handed over to a KEPCO employee.

Tetsuen Nakajima, former secretary-general of an anti-nuclear group based in the city of Obama in Fukui Prefecture, stated, "Please do not restart operations." In addition, participants also gathered in downtown Takahama, where they carried out a demonstration.

Further protests are also scheduled to take place between May 8 and 12 in other Fukui prefectural cities such as Obama, Tsuruga and Sabae, which will oppose the restarting of the reactor at the Takahama plant. In addition to the No. 4 reactor, KEPCO also plans to restart the plant's No. 3 reactor, in early June.

Who wants to restart Hamaoka?

May 13, 2017

Mayors near Hamaoka nuclear plant say wider consensus needed for reactor restarts

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170513/p2a/00m/0na/013000c>

The Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant, idled for five years and now guarded by a 22-meter-tall tsunami wall, is seen on May 12, 2016. Omaezaki, Shizuoka Prefecture, is seen in the background. (Mainichi)

Seven heads of 11 Shizuoka Prefecture municipalities located within a 30-kilometer radius of Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant said in a recent Mainichi Shimbun survey that **they believe restarting the currently idled nuclear reactors requires agreement from not only the host prefecture and host city but also other municipalities around the plant.**

As May 14 marks the sixth year after the Hamaoka nuclear plant suspended operations upon a request from the then government of Prime Minister Naoto Kan, the Mainichi Shimbun surveyed the Shizuoka Prefecture governor and mayors of 11 prefectural municipalities in the "Urgent Protective Action Planning Zone" (UPZ) around the plant. UPZs cover areas within a radius of 30 kilometers of a nuclear plant. While no legal framework has been set up regarding the scope of municipal consensus necessary to restart operations at a nuclear station, requests have been growing for a broader agreement among municipalities -- not just the host prefecture and host municipality -- in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Shizuoka Gov. Heita Kawakatsu, who is running for re-election in the gubernatorial race scheduled for June, has argued for the need to hold a referendum over the restart of the Hamaoka plant and has

expressed a positive view of involving the 11 mayors in decisions regarding the matter. Consequently, the issue could become a key point in the upcoming gubernatorial election.

The Mainichi asked Gov. Kawakatsu and 11 municipal mayors in a multiple-choice form about the scope of local consensus over the Hamaoka plant restart. Five mayors said agreement from all 11 municipalities in the UPZ was necessary, one favored gaining consensus from four municipalities located within a 10-kilometer radius of the plant and another mayor wanted agreement from all municipalities in Shizuoka Prefecture. The mayor of Omaezaki, the host city of the Hamaoka plant, said restarting the idled nuclear plant only required the city's agreement.

Shigeki Nishihara, the mayor of Makinohara, neighboring Omaezaki, said consensus from municipalities in the UPZ was necessary. He commented that local governments (in that area) "have a responsibility to secure their residents' safety." Meanwhile, Yasuo Ota, the mayor of the town of Mori, who picked "agreement from all municipalities in Shizuoka Prefecture" to restart the Hamaoka plant, told the Mainichi, "It is necessary to hear broad opinions when it comes to gaining consensus over nuclear power as a national energy policy."

While the remaining four mayors checked "other" in the survey, most of them expressed their view of involving the national government in deciding the scope of local consensus.

Gov. Kawakatsu stressed that it is not an appropriate time to make a decision over the scope of local consensus and repeated that **a referendum over the issue of the Hamaoka plant is necessary from the standpoint of popular sovereignty.**

No local government heads surveyed were actually in favor of restarting the Hamaoka nuclear plant, even under right conditions such as with approved safety measures. Three city mayors said they were against restarting the plant. Seven local government chiefs chose "other" in the question, while the remaining two said they "cannot judge at the moment."

The Nuclear Regulation Authority's screening process of the Hamaoka nuclear plant has been prolonged as the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors being screened are the same "boiling-water type" reactors as the ones at the devastated Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Furthermore, the estimated maximum ground motion at the Hamaoka nuclear station is likely to be raised because it is located directly above the hypocenter of a potential Nankai Trough megaquake.

Restart protest

May 17, 2017

Reactor restart protested

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170517_29/

Dozens of people have gathered in front of the Takahama nuclear power plant to protest the restart of its No.4 reactor.

About 70 local residents and others from nearby prefectures marched outside the complex, some carrying banners and placards.

They handed over a petition to an official from the operator, Kansai Electric Power Company, demanding that the restart be halted and the plant be decommissioned.

A resident says he opposes the restart as there is a possibility that a huge earthquake could occur near the plant.

A civic group chief says it may be impossible to halt the plant's operations immediately, but he hopes their continued campaign will help reduce accidents or trouble at the plant.

Nuclear War without a War

May 24, 2017

Nuclear War Without a War

<http://newsweekme.com/nuclear-war-without-war/>

By Muhammad Riaz Pasha

There are compelling reasons to end production and use of the nuclear material. There is enough highly enriched uranium on hand to fuel non-weapon uses of the fissile material for a century. To be sure, when nuclear goes wrong, it really, really goes wrong. There is huge increase in the number of cancer patients along with death rate of cancer patients in the world.

Unethical and dangerous experimentation undoubtedly continues in secret up to the present time, ostensibly under the guise of “national security.”

What is the greatest challenge humanity faces in this nuclear age?

How do we define security now, in the age of climate change, nuclear energy, and terrorism?

How, as scientists, do we think about time and responsibility in a world with rapidly evolving nuclear technology?

The truth is that most politicians, businessmen, engineers and nuclear physicists have no innate understanding of radiobiology and the way radiations induce cancer, congenital malformations and genetic diseases which are passed generation to generation.

Low dose of ionizing radiation can increase the risk of longer term effects such as cancer. The effects of radiation dose are either prompt or delayed, prompt effects occur within the first several months and delayed effects occur over many years. The delayed effects include cancer and other diseases. Risk estimate assume that even small amount of ionizing radiation pose some risk. No one knows for sure, what levels of radiation is safe? This question is of ongoing interest to scientists and researchers.

In the nuclear arms race, government doctors and scientists brainwashed the public into believing low dose radiation is not harmful. Some officials even tried to convince people that “a little radiation is good for you.” Totally ignored is the knowledge that the radiation from nuclear fallout could lead to an increased risk of cancer, heart disease, neurological disorders, immune system disease, reproductive abnormalities, sterility, birth defects, and genetic mutations which could be passed on from generation to generations.

According to former Professor of Medical Physics and Physiology at the University of California, Berkeley, Dr. Hardin B. Jones, it's chemotherapy that kills people rather than cancer. Dr. Jones has extensively researched the life expectancy of cancer patients for more than 25 years, after he came to the conclusion that chemotherapy is more harmful than beneficial. All of that research, he conducted; lead him to believe

that “leading edge” cancer treatment is a scam. Also, Dr. Jones is well aware that cancer is a billion dollar industry “People who refused chemotherapy treatment live on average 12 and a half years longer than people who are undergoing chemotherapy,” said Dr. Jones of his research, published in the New York. As of 2012, Canada had over 56,000 tons of highly radioactive nuclear waste and nowhere to put it. Perched on a remote stretch of coastline in north-west England is Europe’s most dangerous building. Inside the innocuous-sounding Product Finishing and Storage Facility at the Sellafield nuclear plant is enough plutonium for about 20,000 nuclear bombs. It is the world’s largest stockpile of civilian plutonium — one of the most toxic substances on the planet — accumulated from decades of reprocessing nuclear fuel from power stations not only in the UK but also Germany, France, Sweden and other countries. They must also decide whether it should be viewed as an asset or liability, is “sleepwalking” to disaster. The meltdowns at the Fukushima Daichi Power plant are dumping 300-400 tons of contaminated material into the Pacific Ocean every single day. With a half-life of 220,000 years that nuclear waste will continue to destroy the Pacific for just about ever. There was no nuclear bomb let of by the Russians it is a hoax!! The Iodine 131 is coming from Fukushima UNIMAGINABLE Nuclear Meltdown Being Covered Up! The Japanese Government teamed up with Toshiba to build robots that could help clean up the highly radioactive site of the Fukushima power plant meltdown. It turned out the robots couldn’t function in such high radiation levels: 600 Sievert per hour, which could kill a human being in about two minutes. Unfortunately, the “scorpions” didn’t get very far. Earlier this month, a “scorpion” robot that was sent inside the meltdown site malfunctioned after just two hours because of high radiation levels. A second “scorpion” was sent in just last week, only to meet a similar fate as its predecessor: the machine’s left crawler belt malfunctioned and the robot stopped working altogether.

Satellite image shows damage at Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant (via ecowatch.com)

Tepco’s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant began operations in 1971 and was severely damaged by a deadly March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that killed over 15,000 people in Japan. The massive release of radiation forced the government to evacuate about 160,000 people and establish a 310-square mile exclusion zone deemed uninhabitable. Tepco has since embarked on an estimated \$188 billion cleanup process that has included the treatment of contaminated water dumped on the site to prevent three out of six reactors from melting down completely.

It is clear to us now that the radiation level in the containment vessel of the crippled Reactor 2 is much higher than experts had believed.

The danger of Reactor 2 reminds the story of the potential collapse of Reactor 4 after the March 11, 2011, earthquake. That reactor contained 14,000 times the radiation of the Hiroshima bomb.

Fumiya Tanabe, an expert on nuclear safety who analyzed the 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear accident in the United States, said the findings show that both the preparation for and the actual decommissioning process at the plant will likely prove much more difficult than expected.

An official of the National Institute of Radiological Sciences said medical professionals have never considered dealing with this level of radiation in their work.

Fukushima disaster is totally out of control. This is a nuclear war without a war. Fukushima radiation has contained entire Pacific Ocean, Radiation detected in Europe and radiation at Fukushima reactors uncontrollable. Nuclear scientists ran away and never came back and Fukushima nuclear facility is a TICKING TIME BOMB.

If a terrorist group exploded just one dirty nuclear weapon, hundreds of thousands of people could die. Because there is no effective protection against nuclear terrorism, the only solution is to prevent terrorists from obtaining nuclear weapons, and the fissile materials needed to make them, in the first place.

Nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons derive power through the fission (splitting) of nuclei of uranium or plutonium atoms, a process that releases large amounts of energy. These fissile materials are used for a variety of civil and military purposes.

Enriching uranium is both technically difficult and expensive as it requires separating isotopes that have very similar chemical and physical properties. The enrichment process is thus the main barrier to producing uranium suitable for use in nuclear weapons.

However, as sophisticated enrichment technology spreads around the world, more groups will be able to overcome the technical barriers to producing HEU for weapons. Moreover, the commercial enrichment facilities used to make LEU fuel for power reactors can be reconfigured to produce HEU for weapons. Without strong regulations in place, these dual-use facilities pose major risks of nuclear terrorism. In addition, the continued use of HEU for both civilian research and naval propulsion reactors increases the risk of terrorist access to this material.

Plutonium occurs only in trace amounts in nature. It is produced as a matter of course in power reactors when the uranium-238 in reactor fuel absorbs neutrons. Countries producing plutonium for weapons have generally operated their reactors to maximize the production of plutonium-239—the isotope most useful for nuclear weapons—and to minimize the production of other plutonium isotopes such as plutonium-240. Weapon-grade plutonium contains less than 7 percent plutonium-240. Under normal nuclear power plant operation, the plutonium in spent reactor fuel contains roughly 24 percent plutonium-240; such plutonium is often referred to as “reactor-grade.” However, essentially all isotopic mixtures of plutonium—including reactor-grade plutonium—can be used for nuclear weapons.

In order to use plutonium in nuclear weapons or nuclear fuel, however, it must be separated from the rest of the spent fuel in a reprocessing facility. Plutonium separation is easier than uranium enrichment because it involves separating different elements rather than different isotopes of the same element, and it uses well known chemical separation techniques. However, since the spent fuel is highly radioactive, this process requires heavily shielded facilities with remote-handling equipment.

In addition to lives and cancer threats there are huge amount of funds are required for uranium enrichment, transportation of enriched nuclear material, storage of nuclear materials, and fabrication of nuclear materials. Authorities defending peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear military deterrence are enjoying superior status along with financial benefits and repeated extensions in the name of nuclear safety and nuclear security at the cost of people all over the nuclear world.

During the early years of nuclear testing it was anticipated that nuclear weapons would be used on the battlefield, and that the Army and Marine Corps had better get used to operating on a “nuclear battlefield.” During the 1952 Big Shot test, 1,700 ground troops took shelter in trenches just seven thousand yards from the thirty-three-kiloton explosion. After the test, the troops conducted a simulated assault that took them to within 160 meters of ground zero. This test and others like them led to increases in leukemia, prostate and nasal cancers among those that participated.

U.S. nuclear testing ceased in 1992. In 2002, the Centers for Disease Control estimated that virtually every American that has lived since 1951 has been exposed to nuclear fallout, and that the cumulative effects of all nuclear testing by all nations could ultimately be responsible for up to eleven thousand deaths in the United States alone. The United States did indeed learn much about how to construct safe and reliable nuclear weapons, and their effects on human life and the environment. In doing so, however, it paid a terrible and tragic price.

This fact sheet covers specific problems relating to nuclear threats and the steps the IAEA and United Nations should take to address them.

United Nations and IAEA can effectively close the door to nuclear weapons of any kind By eliminating the production of HEU, and foregoing reprocessing technology to extract plutonium, They cannot produce any material to be used as a primary nuclear explosive .Nuclear World must be willing to accept far-reaching IAEA surveillance on all their nuclear facilities, including unannounced inspections by IAEA authorities. By imposing similar requirements on all nations, we could eliminate the production of nuclear material altogether. Then, when nuclear weapons are dismantled and the primary nuclear explosive materials are made inaccessible, a nuclear-weapons, nuclear energy and uranium ammunition free world would be within our grasp.

Muhammad Riaz Pasha is a nuclear scientist and former advisor/technical consultant at Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and is a member of International Advisory Council of Nuclear Emergency Action Alliance with 28 years experience in covering key issues of enrichment, nuclear energy and nuclear fusion energy.

Saga court dismisses residents request

June 13, 2017

Court dismisses request to halt restart of Saga reactors

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/13/national/crime-legal/court-nixes-request-halt-restart-saga-reactors/#.WUA32NykLM>

Kyodo

SAGA – A district court on Tuesday dismissed a request from about 230 local residents for an injunction to stop the restart of two reactors at Kyushu Electric Power Co.’s Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture over safety concerns.

The Saga District Court handed down the ruling concerning reactors 3 and 4 at the complex as the utility prepares for their restart this summer or later, having secured the necessary consent of the governor of Saga and the mayor of Genkai. The town hosts the four-reactor power station.

Reactors 3 and 4 have cleared Nuclear Regulation Authority screenings that were based on safety standards revamped after the Fukushima nuclear disaster triggered by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

In Tuesday’s decision, presiding Judge Takeshi Tachikawa said the new safety standards are “reasonable.” The court has found no issues with earthquake resistance or steps taken against serious accidents and does not see any specific danger of radiation exposure at the plant, he added.

The focus of the lawsuit, filed by the residents in July 2011, was whether the operator has adequate measures in place against earthquakes. The plaintiffs argued that serious accidents could occur due to degradation in piping.

“The court is supposed to help the weak, but the ruling is based on economics and politics,” said Hatsumi Ishimaru, 65, who leads the group of residents. “We will continue to fight until we stop the nuclear plant.” The plaintiffs said they will immediately appeal the decision to the Fukuoka High Court.

Kyushu Electric said in a statement it considers the latest decision “appropriate” and will continue to try to ensure safety at the plant.

The ruling may inject momentum into the government’s policy to restart nuclear plants that have fulfilled the new safety standards.

While declining to comment on the court decision itself, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said the government respects the Nuclear Regulation Authority’s judgment that the reactors meet the new safety standards.

Tuesday’s ruling followed a series of court decisions rejecting similar suits seeking to halt the operations of nuclear power plants.

In March, the Osaka High Court overturned a lower court order to halt two nuclear reactors at the Takahama plant in Fukui Prefecture, while in the same month the Hiroshima District Court dismissed a request by local residents to order the halt of a nuclear reactor that was restarted last year at the Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture.

Of the more than 40 commercial reactors nationwide, five are currently in operation. At the Genkai plant, the No. 1 unit is set to be decommissioned due to aging.

NYC rally for ban

June 18, 2017

A-bomb victims join NYC rally for ban on nuke weapons at U.N.

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201706180031.html>

By KEITA MANO/ Staff Writer

NEW YORK--Shouting “No More Hiroshima, No More Nagasaki,” hundreds of demonstrators marched through a downpour in New York City on June 17, calling for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons under negotiations at the United Nations.

Atomic bomb survivors and others took turns giving speeches when they arrived at the square near the United Nations headquarters. The 1.5-kilometer march was organized by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

Elayne Whyte, Costa Rica’s ambassador who is chairing the negotiations, pledged to strive toward the establishment of the treaty, while expressing gratitude toward the 3 million signatures collected in a campaign by atomic bomb survivors to highlight the importance of the U.N. talks.

Hibakusha survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki traveled to New York to coincide with the negotiations and handed the signatures to Whyte at the U.N. headquarters the previous day.

Toshiyuki Mimaki, 75, a hibakusha from Hiroshima, said he was touched by the participation of so many people in the march.

“Despite the heavy rain, a large number of people came and shouted Hiroshima and Nagasaki together,” said Mimaki. “I am so happy and grateful.”

Rallies were also held across Japan on June 17 to coincide with the New York City march.

Women march for nuclear arms ban treaty

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170618_07/

Representatives of Japanese atomic bomb survivors have marched in New York in support of a proposed ban on nuclear weapons being discussed at the United Nations.

Saturday's march was organized by a women's peace group, and came during the second round of UN negotiations aimed at making the world's first-ever treaty to ban nuclear arms.

Toshiyuki Mimaki and Masako Wada came to represent survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Around 800 protestors marched for about 2 kilometers, chanting "No more Hiroshima, No more Nagasaki."

Wada said that atomic bomb survivors have been saying for 72 years that no one else should suffer from nuclear weapons.

Costa Rican Ambassador to the UN Elayne Whyte Gomez, who is also chairing the talks, joined the rally.

She told the demonstrators that she will do her best to successfully conclude the treaty.

After the rally, Mimaki said others share the determination to eliminate nuclear arms.

A demonstrator from the US said that it was great to see atomic bomb survivors supporting the negotiation.

Countries that possess nuclear weapons are not taking part in the talks. Japan, as a country under the US nuclear umbrella, is also sitting out talks.

Negotiators at the UN are hoping to adopt the treaty's provisions by July 7th.

South Korea vows to end nukes

June 19, 2017

Source : Financial Times

<https://www.ft.com/content/40871236-45da-11e7-8519-9f94ee97d996>

South Korea steps back from nuclear power

Pledge to scrap plans for new reactors marks overhaul for country's energy policy

by: Song Jung-a in Seoul

South Korea's president Moon Jae-in has vowed to scrap all existing plans for new nuclear power plants and cancel lifetime extensions for aged reactors, heralding a major overhaul for the country's energy policy.

It marked Mr Moon's second major announcement to change the country's power mix after ordering a temporary halt on eight of the country's older coal power plants soon after taking office last month, amid growing health concerns in one of the world's most polluted countries.

"We will abolish our nuclear-centred energy policy and move towards a nuclear-free era," Mr Moon said on Monday in the coastal city Busan, marking the closure of the country's first nuclear reactor built in 1977. "So far, the country's energy policy focused on low prices and efficiency. But this should change now with our top priority on public safety and the environment."

He added that the country would soon shut down another aged nuclear plant following a previous extension of its lifecycle, while hinting at halting the construction of two new nuclear reactors conditional upon a public consensus.

South Korea has the sixth-largest fleet of nuclear reactors in the world, generating about one-third of its energy needs from 25 reactors. But concerns over nuclear safety have intensified after Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 and a major earthquake in the country's southeastern city last year. The new policy represents a break from the past administrations, which favoured cheaper but dirty coal power and riskier nuclear energy over more costly natural gas and clean renewables.

Worsening air pollution emerged as one of the main campaign issues in South Korea's recent election, with air pollution soaring to record highs in the first few months of 2017. Coal-fired power plants were blamed as one of the main culprits for worsening pollution.

South Korea operates 59 coal-fired power plants that supply nearly 40 per cent of the country's total electricity, but Mr Moon has promised to close those older than 30 years within his five-year presidential term and to not build new coal plants.

But experts caution that the shift could result in energy supply shortages and higher costs for the country that imports much of its energy from overseas. South Korea has the highest per capita electricity demand in Asia, although the country ranks among the top importers of coal, oil and gas in the world.

Former refugee, special forces soldier and human rights lawyer sets out on reform mission

"It is a step in the right direction but there is a question mark over how to address the potential supply shortfall and rising costs," says Kim Kyung-nam, professor at the Graduate School of Energy and Environment at Korea University.

Mr Moon has vowed to increase the portion of renewable energy to 20 per cent by 2030 and increase LNG-fired power production, even raising the possibility of reviving a deal to import natural gas from Russia through North Korean territory.

Renewable sources account for 6.6 per cent of the country's energy supply, the lowest among OECD countries, as their production has been damped by technological constraints, heavy regulations and weak demand.

The government plans to invest Won13.8tn (\$12.2bn) this year in developing alternative energy sources in order to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 37 per cent by 2030 under the Paris climate agreement. It also plans to ease regulations and offer more incentives to spur clean energy production.

But experts worry that it could be challenging to increase clean energy production, given the lack of natural resources for the populous and mountainous country. This would mean higher energy costs for South Korean industries, which have enjoyed low electricity prices.

"If you get rid of nuclear energy, which is relatively low cost once built, and replace coal with more expensive LNG, that's going to translate into higher electricity prices, which could hurt domestic industries [and] it is not going to be popular," says Kerry-Anne Shanks at energy consultant Wood Mackenzie.

Experts also caution the government's anti-nuclear stance bodes ill for the country's ambition to export more reactors abroad. On the back of the thriving domestic industry, state-run utility Kepco has emerged as one of the few international players capable of successfully building nuclear reactors, unlike overseas rivals mired in cost overruns and construction delays.

"One of Kepco's biggest strengths is its track record in development of domestic nuclear capacity. Mr Moon's plans to suspend or scrap nuclear developments within South Korea could hurt this record," says Ms Shanks.

"A withdrawal of government support for nuclear development in South Korea would send a negative signal to foreign countries looking to purchase reactors."

New South Korean president vows to end use of nuclear power

***Moon Jae-in said he would lead country
towards a 'nuclear-free era' following
fears of a Fukushima-style meltdown***

Justin McCurry *in Tokyo, The Guardian, Monday 19 June 2017*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/19/new-south-korean-president-vows-to-end-use-of-nuclear-power>

South Korea's new president, Moon Jae-in, has vowed to phase out the country's dependence on nuclear power, warning of "unimaginable consequences" from a Fukushima-style meltdown.

Moon, a left-leaning liberal who won last month's presidential election by a landslide following the impeachment and arrest of Park Geun-hye, said he would increase the role of renewable energy and lead South Korea towards a "nuclear-free era".

Speaking at an event to mark the closure of the country's oldest nuclear plant, Kori-1, he said: "So far, South Korea's energy policy pursued cheap prices and efficiency. "Cheap production prices were considered the priority while the public's life and safety took a back seat. But it's time for a change. "We will abolish our nuclear-centred energy policy and move towards a nuclear-free era. We will completely scrap construction plans for new nuclear reactors that are currently under way."

Moon added that he would not extend the operation of ageing reactors, many of which will come to the end of their lifespans between 2020 and 2030.

Weaning South Korea off nuclear power, however, could take decades, and there is expected to be opposition from construction companies, which have increased technology exports under Moon's nuclear-friendly predecessors.

The country was the fifth-largest producer of nuclear energy last year, according to the World Nuclear Association, with its 25 reactors generating about a third of its electricity.

The former president Lee Myung-bak saw nuclear as an important source of clean energy, while Park wanted to increase the number of reactors to 36 by 2029.

Moon recognised the role of nuclear power in South Korea's rapid economic development, but added that Japan's Fukushima disaster – which prompted the evacuation of tens of thousands of people – had convinced him that his country must look to new sources of energy.

"The country's economic status has changed, our awareness on the importance of the environment has changed. The notion that the safety and lives of people are more important than anything else has become a firm social consensus," he said.

Anti-nuclear campaigners have long warned of the potentially disastrous consequences of a meltdown at a nuclear plant in South Korea, where many reactors are close to densely populated areas.

The public's support for nuclear power has weakened since the 2011 Fukushima meltdown and a 2013 corruption scandal over fake safety certificates for reactor parts.

"The Fukushima nuclear accident has clearly proved that nuclear reactors are neither safe, economical nor environmentally friendly," Yonhap news agency quoted Moon as saying.

"South Korea is not safe from the risk of earthquakes, and a nuclear accident caused by a quake can have such a devastating impact."

He also plans to close at least 10 ageing coal-fired power plants before his term ends in 2022 and to boost renewables' share of the energy mix to 20% by 2030.

TEPCO's new board

June 23, 2017

New Tepco chief reaffirms Fukushima commitment, but underscored need for plant restarts

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/06/23/business/corporate-business/new-tepco-chief-reaffirms-fukushima-commitment-underscored-need-plant-restarts/#.WU6G4FFpyos>

by Shusuke Murai

Staff Writer

Dealing with the aftermath of nuclear disaster at Fukushima No.1 power plant remains the most important mission for Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc., Tomoaki Kobayakawa, Tepco's new president, said Friday, but he also stressed the need to restart nuclear plants for the sake of continuing the utility's business.

"To fulfill responsibilities over (disaster in) Fukushima is the fundamental (policy) for our company, and that will never change at all," Kobayakawa, the former chief of the Tepco's electricity retail arm, said at a news conference at the firm's headquarters in Tokyo.

Kobayakawa officially took the helm as head of the ailing power giant after the reshuffle of top management was approved at a shareholder's meeting earlier on Friday.

Struggling financially amid ballooning costs for dealing with the aftermath of the nuclear accident caused by the devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011, Tepco is effectively under control of the state with the state-backed Nuclear Damage Compensation and Decommissioning Facilitation Corp. holding the majority of its shares.

Ten of 13 board directors were replaced with new members, including honorary chairman of Hitachi Ltd. Takashi Kawamura. Kawamura was appointed the new chairman to back Kobayakawa.

Under the new board, Tepco will proceed with the new revitalization program it mapped out in May. The plan includes reactivating Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture, so as to make up for the estimated ¥22 trillion cost of dealing with damage, including decommissioning of Fukushima No.1 and compensation for disaster-hit areas.

“I believe securing safety and gaining the understanding of local people are our utmost priorities” in order to reactivate the nuclear plant, Kobayakawa said.

In October 2016 in the Niigata gubernatorial election, voters elected doctor and lawyer Ryuichi Yoneyama, whose anti-nuclear stance is firmly against any restart of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant, over a pro-nuclear candidate from the Liberal Democratic Party.

At the shareholder’s meeting in Tokyo’s Shibuya Ward earlier Friday, which was attended by about 1,200 people, some expressed diverse opinions on the company’s intention to restart nuclear power plants.

One suggested that restarting a nuclear power plant could be a “ray of hope” that stands as the symbol of recovery from the disaster, while another claimed Tepco’s financial recovery will “never be possible” without reactivating ceased plants.

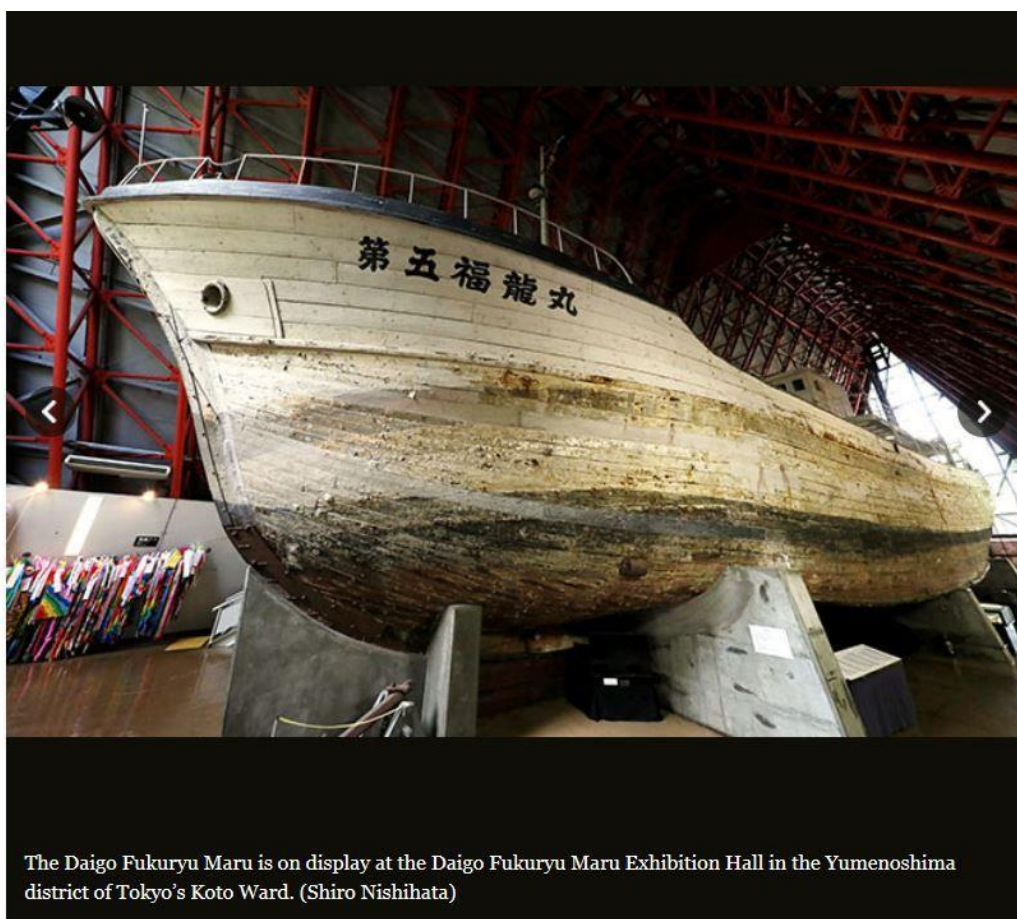
Others were concerned about the firm’s plan to continue its nuclear power business.

One shareholder called the proposed restart of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant as “a long-shot gamble” repeatedly saying that the Niigata plant is “good-for-nothing”, and that it has only caused the utility to incur costs of ¥680 billion for safety measures.

Another shareholder urged the utility to abandon its plan to reactivate Fukushima No.2 and Kariyazaki-Kariwa, and open them for engineers worldwide to use as research centers for decommissioning technologies.

These proposals were turned down at the end of the three-hour meeting after facing opposition from board members.

Lucky Dragon remains antinuke symbol



July 14, 2017

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201707140039.html>

Lucky Dragon, now 70, remains intact as an anti-nuclear icon

By NAOMI NISHIMURA/ Staff Writer

A series of 360-degree view shots by a special camera at the Daigo Fukuryu Maru Exhibition Hall show a fish-hold-turned-cabin, a close-up of an original wall of a fish hold, a mezzanine exhibition space, and the stern of the vessel. (Atsushi Takahashi)

Peeling paint, beams blackened from aging and dusty but original equipment remain inside the Daigo Fukuryu Maru (Lucky Dragon No. 5), a fishing vessel that became a symbol of the anti-nuclear movement in around the globe.

The vessel was showered with radioactive fallout from a hydrogen bomb test at the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands in 1954. Twenty-three crew members were affected, and one died within six months of the blast.

The Daigo Fukuryu Maru is now preserved at an exhibition hall in the reclaimed Yumenoshima district of Tokyo's Koto Ward.

It not only serves as a reminder of the dangers of nuclear weapons and testing, but it is also a rare and important heritage of Japan's now-dwindling wooden shipbuilding industry.

Asahi Shimbun reporters on July 13 were given special permission to look inside the ship, which is usually off-limits for conservation reasons.

“The lifespan of a wooden ship is between 15 and 20 years,” said Kazuya Yasuda, 64, chief curator of the hall, who showed the reporters around the vessel. “It is probably the only wooden ship that survived from right after the end of the World War II through today.”

The 30-meter-long ship, with a gross tonnage of 140 tons, is a towering presence at the display hall.

Signs of aging are clear on both the inside and outside of the vessel.

Paint on the hull is peeling away, and dents and scratches appear all over the planks. Parts and equipment used when the ship was hit by nuclear fallout remain in place.

The Daigo Fukuryu Maru was initially constructed in 1947 as a bonito fishing boat. Four years later, it was modified into a tuna boat to be operated in the Pacific Ocean and was based in Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture.

The central government bought the ship after the nuclear incident in 1954, and it was used as a training vessel for a university.

After the Daigo Fukuryu Maru was decommissioned in 1967, it was left in Yumenoshima, which was a landfill back then.

A preservation movement started soon thereafter. The Tokyo metropolitan government agreed to take care of the vessel and opened the Daigo Fukuryu Maru Exhibition Hall in 1976.

Court dismisses residents' request to stop reactor

July 21, 2017

Residents fail in court battle to halt Ehime nuclear reactor

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201707210051.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

MATSUYAMA--Eleven local residents have lost their court bid to shut down the Ikata nuclear power plant's No. 3 reactor, which was restarted in August 2016.

The Matsuyama District Court on July 21 turned down the request for a temporary injunction to halt operations.

The court said there is nothing unreasonable in the new safety standards introduced by the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster and in the safety measures taken by the plant's operator, Shikoku Electric Power Co.

The residents intend to appeal to a higher court.

The nuclear power plant in Ikata, Ehime Prefecture, is located near the “median tectonic line fault zone,” one of the largest active fault lines in Japan.

It is also at risk if a large tsunami is caused by a powerful earthquake along the Nankai Trough off the coast of western Japan.

After the powerful quakes that hit Kumamoto Prefecture in April 2016, the Ehime residents filed an injunction with the court in May the same year, three months before the restart of the No. 3 reactor.

They said that as earthquakes could also occur around Ikata, it was necessary to continue the suspension of operations.

Since then, the residents have battled with Shikoku Electric Power at five hearings and through the exchange of documents.

The points of dispute were whether the NRA's new safety standards are reasonable and whether the biggest tremors assumed by Shikoku Electric Power are of the appropriate level.

As for injunctions against nuclear power plants, the Fukui District Court decided in April 2015 to suspend operations of the No. 3 and the No. 4 reactors at the Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The Otsu District Court in the neighboring prefecture of Shiga also made a similar decision about the reactors in March 2016.

However, those decisions were nullified in subsequent rulings.

(This article was written by Yosuke Okawa and Yoshitaka Unezawa.)

July 21, 2017

Court dismisses request for halt of Ikata reactor

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170721_20/

A court in western Japan has dismissed a request by residents for a suspension of a reactor at a nuclear power plant.

The Matsuyama District Court issued the decision on the No. 3 reactor of the Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture on Friday.

The group of 11 residents of the prefecture filed for an injunction in May last year. They cited a risk of a serious accident in case of a major earthquake. The plant is near active faults.

The facility's operator, Shikoku Electric Power Company, says it calculated the maximum possible earthquake shock and took sufficient safety measures.

But the residents say the utility underestimated the shock.

In the decision, Presiding Judge Keiko Kuboi called the utility's calculation method reasonable.

Kuboi also said government regulations for nuclear power plants introduced after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident cannot be considered unreasonable.

She said the court finds no fault in the Nuclear Regulation Authority's decision to allow the reactor to go back online under the regulations.

The reactor was restarted last August under the new rules.

This March, the Hiroshima District Court dismissed a request by another group of residents for a halt of the reactor.

No reference to new reactors in energy plan

August 2, 2017

Updated basic energy plan will not refer to new reactors

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708020026.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The government will avoid any reference to building new reactors or replacing aging facilities in its basic long-term energy policy, in light of persistent, public opposition to reliance on nuclear energy.

"There has been no development in circumstances that calls for a change of the outline" of the nation's basic energy policy, industry minister Hiroshige Seko said Aug. 1, indicating that the key parts of the existing plan will remain unchanged.

Whether to mention the construction of new reactors had been the focus of attention as the government prepares to undertake its latest review of the plan, which is conducted roughly every three years.

Although the current plan, crafted in 2014, defines nuclear energy as an "important base load power source," **it does not refer to the government's position with regard to the construction of new reactors.**

The nuclear power industry, along with related business circles, have been pushing for the construction of new reactors.

But the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which oversees the electricity industry, is hesitant to commit to new construction projects in the new energy plan, given the general outcry over nuclear energy following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Seko said the government's decision in 2015 to ensure measures are taken so that nuclear energy accounts for 20 to 22 percent of the nation's overall power output by fiscal 2030 will be achievable without adding new reactors.

"We can attain the objective without building new reactors if existing ones are brought back online," he said.

Seko added that an advisory panel will meet Aug. 9 to discuss the review of the basic energy plan.

The ministry also plans to hold an inaugural meeting of experts late this month to discuss energy policy through 2050 and whether Japan will need nuclear power plants in the long term.

Five reactors are now operating in Japan after they were certified as meeting more stringent new regulations put in place after the Fukushima disaster.

According to a ministry estimate, the goal of nuclear power accounting for 20 to 22 percent of the nation's energy needs in fiscal 2030 would be achieved if 30 or so existing reactors were in service.

Asahi Shimbun opinion polls since the Fukushima disaster have consistently shown that opposition to nuclear power is almost double that of those who are in favor.

(This article was written by Tokuhiko Saito and Tsuneo Sasai.)

Highschool students launch petition

August 12, 2017

High school anti-nuclear petition hits record

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170811_21/

A record number of high school students across Japan have signed a petition addressed to the United Nations calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

High school students in the atomic-bombed city of Nagasaki and elsewhere have been collecting such signatures annually since 2001. The campaign was in response to the 1998 nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan.

Students met in Nagasaki on Friday to compile the signatures collected over the past year.

The total came to 214,300, up nearly 90,000 from last year. According to the campaign website, the number includes 8,418 signatures collected in South Korea, Switzerland, New Zealand and the Philippines.

The students handed the signatures to 3 high school peace ambassadors from Nagasaki Prefecture.

One of the ambassadors, Rina Tomita, says she was surprised by the number.

She says it is not easy to ask people to sign a petition, and the record number of signatures is the fruit of hard work by the students.

Another ambassador, Daiki Mizokami, says they will deliver the signatures to the UN and make an appeal to the world for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The 3 students will join peace ambassadors chosen from elsewhere in Japan and deliver the signatures to the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament at the UN headquarters in Geneva on August 22nd.

New energy plan : Phase-out nukes and fight global warming

August 14, 2017

EDITORIAL: Phasing out nuclear power a must for Japan's new energy plan

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708140020.html>

The industry ministry has opened discussions for reviewing Japan's Strategic Energy Plan, which defines a grand framework for how the country will consume, and cover the demand for, electric power, heat and other forms of energy.

Industry minister Hiroshige Seko has said the core part of the plan will remain basically unchanged. Minor adjustments alone, however, would simply not suffice under current circumstances.

The ongoing edition of the plan is questionable in many respects, including in the way it defines nuclear energy as a mainstay power source despite broad public opposition to restarts of nuclear reactors.

A big wave of change is occurring on a global scale. For example, there are moves, mostly in advanced industrialized nations, for pulling the plug on nuclear power. There is also a trend for moving from coal-fired thermal power generation, given that the Paris Agreement has now taken effect for fighting global warming. Renewable energy options, such as wind and solar power, are spreading rapidly.

Japan should also redraw the image of its future self. First and foremost, a phase-out of nuclear power should define the foundation of the country's new future perspective.

While combining a nuclear phase-out with a fight against global warming won't be an easy task, advances in energy-saving technologies and in renewable energy options have lowered the hurdles for pursuing both. There is a need to seek pathways for doing so, with due consideration given to cost performance and the stability of the energy supply.

FALSE PLEDGE TO LOWER DEPENDENCY ON NUCLEAR POWER

The current Strategic Energy Plan, which was approved by the Cabinet in 2014, contains one deceptive aspect.

In response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011, the plan included a passage saying that, “Japan will minimize its dependency on nuclear power,” but it also defined atomic energy as an “important base-load power source.”

The plan also explicitly stated that the government would “proceed with the restart of the nuclear power plants” in accordance with the country’s revised regulatory standards. And nuclear reactors across Japan are actually being brought back online.

The Long-Term Energy Supply and Demand Outlook, a document worked out by the industry ministry in 2015 on the basis of the energy plan, favors a return to nuclear power more openly. The document assumes that atomic energy will account for about 20 percent of Japan’s total power supply in fiscal 2030. That figure translates to 30 or so active nuclear reactors. Restarting reactors that are currently available for restarts would not be enough to achieve that number, so there would also be a need to either extend the service lives of, or replace, many of the aging nuclear reactors.

But even experts with a neutral stance on nuclear power policy have criticized that assumption for being too unrealistic, because nuclear energy is falling out of favor with the times both in Japan and abroad following the Fukushima disaster. For example, the public has grown more skeptical about the use of nuclear power, and the costs of implementing required safety measures have soared.

The question of how to dispose of radioactive waste from nuclear power reactors remains unlikely to be solved any time soon in most of the countries that have such reactors, including Japan. Efforts are spreading, mostly in advanced nations, for seeking to scrap all, or a considerable part, of a national fleet of nuclear reactors.

The forthcoming edition of Japan’s Strategic Energy Plan should no longer define atomic energy as a mainstay source of power. Minimizing dependency on nuclear power should be designated a priority issue instead of being left as a hollow promise. Discussions should be made on what efforts are necessary for achieving that goal, and a road map should be presented in a concrete manner.

PHASE OUT NUCLEAR, FIGHT GLOBAL WARMING

Intensive power-saving efforts, combined with a substantial growth in renewable energy options, will represent a solution to the question of how to phase out nuclear power and fight global warming at the same time. It has been pointed out that such measures are costly and have other disadvantages, but possibilities have been opening up for them in recent years.

On the power-saving front, the mainstream approach in advanced nations lies in suppressing energy consumption while pursuing economic growth at the same time. Technological innovation is taking place, including in the use of information technology for efficient control of devices and for adjustment of the power demand.

The government should use policy incentives and regulations to apply strong pressure on the private sector to take action, just like it did when Japan was getting over the oil crisis in the past.

On the front of renewable energy options, the current Strategic Energy Plan says that the government “has accelerated the introduction of renewable energy as far as possible.”

Solar power has indeed risen sharply in output over the past several years, but the growth of wind power has remained stalled. Renewable energy sources account for around 15 percent of Japan's total power supply, far behind the corresponding figures for European nations.

There is an urgent need to remove obstacles to realize a more substantial spread of the use of renewable energy sources. For example, operation of facilities should be improved so that more electricity generated from renewable energy sources can be supplied to areas where power transmission lines are currently near capacity. Rules should also be set on how to divide burdens of payable expenses so it will become easier for concerned parties to make additional investments that are deemed necessary.

Wind and solar power have become drastically cheaper to generate in the rest of the world. They can now compete on an equal footing with thermal power and nuclear power in more and more corners of the globe.

Those forms of energy remain relatively expensive in Japan, so we should rack our brains to improve the efficiency of wind and solar power plants, across all stages from their installation to their operation.

The spread of renewable energy options has been helped by a system that allows the cost of power generation to be added on top of electricity charges. In future years, however, it will also become essential to design an institutional setup that helps suppress the burdens passed on to the public.

In the meantime, thermal power has risen sharply in supply to fill a hole left by nuclear power reactors, which went offline and have remained idle in the wake of the Fukushima disaster.

The output of thermal power should be reduced steadily in step with the expanding use of renewable energy.

The current Strategic Energy Plan defines coal-fired thermal power, which is cheap to generate, as another mainstay power source on par with nuclear energy. The private sector has an army of plans for building new coal-fired thermal plants.

But moves are taking place quickly overseas for lowering dependency on coal-fired thermal power, which is generated at the cost of particularly large carbon dioxide emissions. Natural gas, which is friendlier to the environment, should be given priority when it comes to thermal power generation.

EYES SHOULD BE SET ON GLOBAL TREND

The proceeding of discussions for the ongoing review of the energy plan is also problematic.

Apart from having the matter discussed by an existing council, the industry ministry is also setting up a separate panel of experts for discussing long-term strategies. Scholars and senior corporate executives sit on the two bodies who are supportive of the current energy policy, whereas advocates of a departure from nuclear power and of intensive development of renewable energy options account for a mere handful of their members.

One could only doubt that such a lineup of members will enable substantial discussions. It would be indispensable to also include experts who are well-versed in overseas trends, matters of technology and issues of cost performance and approach the question from a broad array of angles.

Japan, a country with scanty natural resources, has placed emphasis on the stability of the energy supply.

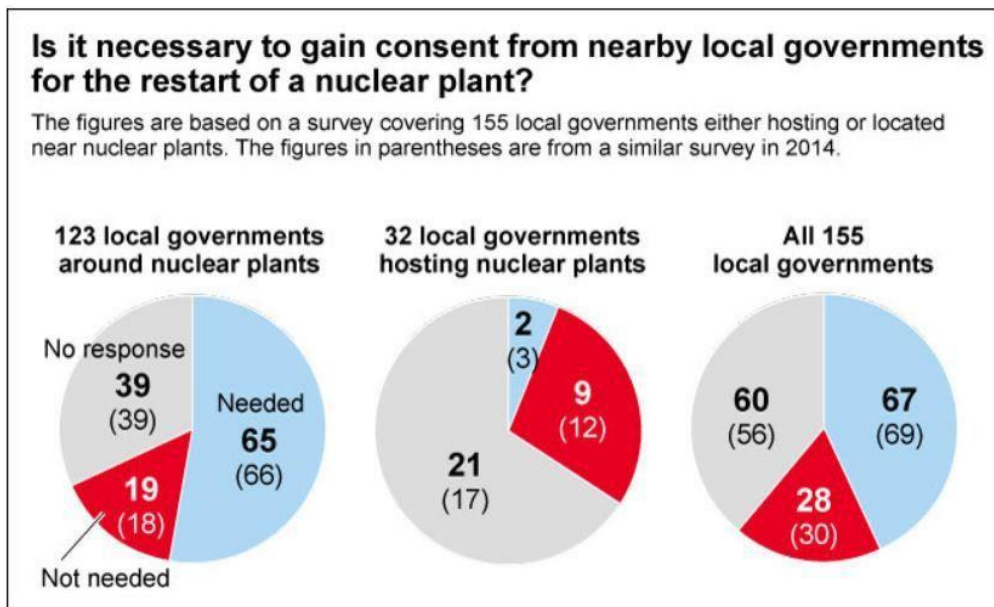
That was indeed a necessary viewpoint, but it also led Japan, in a sense, to fall into a state of sclerosis whereby the use of nuclear power became the central axis of the nation's energy policy.

Renewable energy sources have already replaced thermal energy and nuclear energy as the leading destinations of global investments into the electric power sector.

Japan should quickly switch its energy policy instead of turning its back on the international trend.

--The Asahi Shimbun, Aug. 13

Who should have a say about restarts?



The Asahi Shimbun

August 22, 2017

Municipalities near nuclear plants want say over restarts

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708210035.html>

More than half of municipalities within a 30-kilometer radius of nuclear power plants insist their approval must be sought for restarts, but only 6 percent of local governments that host such facilities agree.

The finding that 53 percent of municipalities require prior consultations came in a survey by The Asahi Shimbun undertaken two years after a reactor at the Sendai nuclear plant in Kagoshima Prefecture went back online in August 2015, the first to do so under new, more stringent nuclear regulations adopted in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

The mayor of Hitachiomiya, Ibaraki Prefecture, said local governments beyond host communities "need" to have a say over restarts as the central government revised its nuclear emergency guidelines in 2012 to require municipalities within the 30-km radius to have evacuation plans in place in the event of a serious accident.

Before the Fukushima accident, only local governments within 8-10 km of a nuclear power plant had to do so.

The mayor of Misato, Miyagi Prefecture, said his town's approval should be sought for a restart because a "local government not receiving economic benefits can make a levelheaded judgment on the pros and cons of resumed operations."

Host communities receive grants and subsidies from the central government, in addition to taxes and other revenue sources related to power generation.

In the survey, The Asahi Shimbun contacted the heads of 155 local governments that either host or are situated within a 30-km radius of the 16 nuclear plants across the nation, excluding the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant. The figure includes the prefectural government of Hokkaido and 20 other prefectural authorities that host plants.

As things stand, there are no legal steps that an operator of a nuclear facility must take, such as winning the consent of a host municipality or the prefectural government, before a plant's restart.

The Sendai nuclear plant went back online after operator Kyushu Electric Power Co. got the go-ahead only from Satsuma-Sendai, which hosts the plant, and Kagoshima Prefecture for a resumption of operations.

The survey found that Mihama, home to Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Mihama nuclear plant, was against the notion of asking nearby municipalities for their approval for a restart.

"Only a host community has a history of contributing to the safe operation of a nuclear plant," the mayor said.

Of all the local governments, 61 heads called for legal procedures to be adopted with respect to restarts.

All these calls came from municipalities located in areas surrounding nuclear power plants, except for one.

"As long as nuclear energy has been promoted as a state program, the central government should take responsibility for setting the legal framework for a restart," said the mayor of Makinohara, Shizuoka Prefecture.

The mayor of Imari, Saga Prefecture, echoed a similar view.

"Things remain ambiguous because no legal procedures are in place," the mayor said. "The government is reluctant to enshrine the steps into law because that will make restarts harder. However, the central government should also listen to what people in municipalities beyond host communities have to say."

The survey also found that calls for plant operators to gain the consent of the municipalities within a 30-km radius of a proposed restart have somewhat abated among 35 local governments, where nuclear plants have resumed operations.

Ten heads sided with this view in the current survey, down from 13 in the previous survey in autumn 2014.

Another 10 leaders called for setting up legal procedures for restarts, compared with 14 in the last survey. Apart from the Sendai nuclear plant, Ikata in Ehime Prefecture and Takahama in Fukui Prefecture are currently operating.

Municipalities situated close to facilities that are expected to go back online in the near future are now taking a more clear-cut stance on nuclear energy issues.

Representatives from cities around the Genkai nuclear plant in Genkai, Saga Prefecture, formed a group to present a united front against moves to resume its operations, which is expected this winter.

Although the mayors of Hirado and Matsuura, both in Nagasaki Prefecture, did not take a stance in the 2014 survey, they joined the municipalities against the restart in the latest poll, bringing municipalities opposed to the restart to four, or half of the eight local governments within a 30-km radius of the facility.

The Genkai town hall and the Saga prefectural government have already agreed to resuming plant operations.

(This article was written by Natsuki Okamura, Rei Inoue and Yusuke Fukui.)

Sumiteru Taniguchi



Sumiteru Taniguchi, a survivor of the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki, shows a photo of himself taken in 1945, during an interview at his office in Nagasaki on June 30, 2015. (AP file photo)

August 30, 017

Atomic bomb survivor Sumiteru Taniguchi dies

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20170830_80/

Atomic bomb survivor and prominent peace activist Sumiteru Taniguchi died of cancer on Wednesday morning. He was 88 years old.

Taniguchi survived the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki. He was 16 at the time, and was about 1.8 kilometers away from ground zero when the bomb hit. He suffered severe burns on his back.

He appealed for the support of survivors and elimination of nuclear weapons throughout his life.

Ten years after the bombing, Taniguchi formed a group with other survivors who experienced the ordeal.

Taniguchi had served as a representative of Nihon Hidankyo, or the Japan Confederation of Atomic and Hydrogen Bomb Sufferers Organizations, since 2010.

He was also the head of the atomic bomb survivors' association in Nagasaki since 2006.

In 2010 Taniguchi shared with the world his horrific experience by showing a picture of him taken just after the bombing at a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference at the UN headquarters.

Last month, he welcomed the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty prohibits development, possession and use of nuclear weapons. But he said he felt uneasy thinking about how the world would be after all the people who had experienced the inhumanity of nuclear weapons

have died.

Another representative of Nihon Hidankyo, Terumi Tanaka, told reporters that he is very sad to hear of Taniguchi's death. He said Taniguchi devoted his life to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, while entering and leaving hospital frequently.

Tanaka said Taniguchi's death will be a great loss for the peace activities promoted by the atomic bomb survivors.

The head of the atomic bomb survivors' group in Hiroshima, Sunao Tsuboi, says he feels sad at having lost longtime fellow activist Sumiteru Taniguchi.

Tsuboi issued a statement expressing respect for Taniguchi's accomplishments.

He vowed to continue working with the few remaining atomic bomb survivors to abolish nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters he'd met Taniguchi when he visited Nagasaki. He offered his heartfelt condolences.

See also:

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20170830153601369/>

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708300057.html>

It must never be forgotten



Sumiteru Taniguchi bares his scarred back in 2005. (Asahi Shimbun file photo)

August 31, 2017

VOX POPULI: A-bomb survivor Taniguchi led a life of pain, but it was not in vain

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201708310022.html>

Sumiteru Taniguchi, a Nagasaki hibakusha (A-bomb survivor), weighed himself every night. Even a slight weight gain had the effect of pulling and ripping the skin on his back, causing excruciating pain. He constantly strove not to gain more than three kilos, according to "Ikiteiru Kagiri Katari Tsuzukeru" (I will keep speaking as long as I am alive), a picture book about Taniguchi by Ai Tatebayashi.

In managing his health, his indispensable partner was his wife, Eiko, until her death in spring 2016.

Every night, Eiko applied an ointment and moisturizer on his back. But he suffered greatly from tumors that kept growing. "It felt like sleeping on a mattress sprinkled with stones," Taniguchi recalled. "The pain kept me awake."

Totally devoted as Eiko was to her husband, she sobbed when she saw his mangled back for the first time. She knew nothing of the reality of the effects of radiation exposure from the atomic bombing. Realizing her husband could not stay alive without her constant support, she committed herself to caring for him. Taniguchi, who became a vocal activist for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, died on Aug. 30. He was 88. He was 16 years old when the city of Nagasaki was leveled by atomic bombing on Aug. 9, 1945. He joined an anti-nuclear movement early on, but preferred to remain in the background, refusing to be treated like a freak show specimen.

But he had a change of heart at age 41, when he discovered that he was the boy in a harrowing picture taken by a U.S. research team at the onset of the postwar Allied occupation of Japan. The boy is shown lying prone with vacant eyes, his entire back burned raw and scarlet.

Taniguchi resolved to devote his life to testifying to the horror of nuclear weapons.

Seven years ago, he gave a speech at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, holding up that famous picture that shows his "Akai senaka" (Scarlet back): "I am not a guinea pig, nor am I an exhibit. But you who are here today, please don't turn your eyes away from me. Please look at me again."

The photo aroused controversy in Japan as well as abroad. One exhibition was canceled because the image was deemed too graphic and disturbing.

Had Taniguchi himself not begged people to not avert their eyes, the picture probably would have been seen by many fewer people.

Once seen, Taniguchi's back simply cannot be unseen. And it must never be forgotten.

Chiba court:TEPCO - but not State - ordered to pay compensation

September 22, 2017

Tepco again ordered to pay damages in nuclear disaster, but not state

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170922/p2g/00m/0dm/081000c>

CHIBA, Japan (Kyodo) -- A Japanese court ordered Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc. on Friday to pay damages over the nuclear disaster at its Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant following a deadly 2011 earthquake and tsunami, but dismissed claims against the state.

The Chiba District Court ruling follows a Maebashi District Court decision in March that found negligence on the part of both Tepco and the government played a part in the worst nuclear catastrophe since Chernobyl and ordered them to pay damages.

Friday's ruling stemmed from a lawsuit filed by 45 people who were forced to flee Fukushima Prefecture to Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo as reactors that lost cooling functions caused meltdowns and spewed massive amounts of radioactive materials into the air.

The Chiba court awarded a total of 376 million yen (\$3.35 million) to 42 of them, including all four who voluntarily evacuated. In the suit filed in March 2013, the plaintiffs were collectively seeking around 2.8 billion yen in damages from the government and plant operator.

The focal point of the Chiba case was whether the government and Tepco were able to foresee the huge tsunami that hit the seaside plant on March 11, 2011, and take preventive measures beforehand, with conflicting claims made by the parties regarding the government's long-term earthquake assessment, which was made public in 2002.

The assessment, made by the government's earthquake research promotion unit, predicted a 20 percent chance of a magnitude-8-level tsunami-triggering earthquake occurring along the Japan Trench in the Pacific Ocean within 30 years, including the area off Fukushima.

Based on the assessment, the plaintiffs argued that, with the plant standing on ground roughly 10 meters above sea level, a tsunami higher than the ground striking the plant could have been predicted.

They then claimed that the disaster was therefore preventable if emergency power generation equipment had been placed on higher ground, and that the government should have made Tepco take such measures by exercising its regulatory powers.

The government and Tepco, for their part, claimed the assessment was not established knowledge, and that even if they had foreseen a tsunami higher than the site of the plant and taken measures against it, they cannot be held liable as the actual tsunami was much higher at around 15.5 meters.

The government also argued that it obtained regulatory powers to force Tepco to take anti-flooding measures only after a legislative change following the disaster.

In Friday's ruling, the court found the government not liable, saying that while the government indeed has such powers, not exercising them was not too unreasonable.

While ordering Tepco to pay damages, the court determined that the plant operator did not commit serious negligence that would have required a higher compensation amount, saying it did not totally leave anti-tsunami measures unaddressed.

The plaintiffs' lawyers criticized the ruling as unfair, in that the court did not recognize the state's liability. But they still positively rated the court's acknowledgement of the loss of the plaintiffs' hometown, jobs and personal relationships, and compensation for such a loss.

In March, the Maebashi District Court in Gunma Prefecture recognized negligence on the part not just of Tepco but also the government, saying they were able to foresee a tsunami high enough to inundate the plant.

It was the first such ruling issued among around 30 suits of the same kind and the first to rule in favor of plaintiffs.

The Maebashi court acknowledged that the government had regulatory authority over Tepco even before the accident, noting that "failing to exercise it is strikingly irrational and illegal."

The court awarded to 62 of 137 plaintiffs a total of 38.55 million yen in damages, far less than the 1.5 billion yen sought in total. Many of the plaintiffs have appealed the district court decision.

In the Chiba suit, the 45 plaintiffs, including four who evacuated voluntarily, sought 20 million yen each for compensation for their evacuation and the loss of their hometown, jobs and personal relationships because their lives were uprooted.

The magnitude-9.0 earthquake and ensuing tsunami struck northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011, causing multiple meltdowns and hydrogen blasts at the nuclear power plant. Around 55,000 people remained evacuated both within and outside Fukushima Prefecture as of the end of August in the wake of the disaster.

TEPCO ordered to pay evacuees of Fukushima nuclear disaster

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201709220052.html>

By NOBUYUKI TAKIGUCHI/ Staff Writer

CHIBA--A district court here on Sept. 22 ordered Tokyo Electric Power Co. to pay 376 million yen (\$3.3 million) in compensation to evacuees of the Fukushima nuclear disaster but absolved the central government of responsibility.

Forty-five people in 18 households who evacuated to Chiba Prefecture following the 2011 meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant sought a total of about 2.8 billion yen from TEPCO and the government. About 30 similar lawsuits involving 12,000 plaintiffs have been filed at district courts around Japan.

The Chiba District Court ruling was the second so far.

In March, the Maebashi District Court in Gunma Prefecture found both TEPCO and the government responsible for the nuclear disaster and ordered compensation totaling 38.55 million yen for 62 plaintiffs. The main point of the lawsuit in the Chiba District Court was whether TEPCO and the government could have foreseen a towering tsunami hitting the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant and taken measures to prevent the disaster.

The plaintiffs emphasized a long-term appraisal released by the central government in 2002, which estimated a 20-percent possibility of a magnitude-8 level earthquake occurring between the coast off the Sanriku region in the Tohoku region to the coast off the Boso Peninsula of Chiba Prefecture within the next 30 years.

The plaintiffs argued that this appraisal shows it was possible to forecast a tsunami off the coast from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, and that measures could have been taken even as late as 2006 to prevent the disaster.

For the first time in a court case involving compensation related to the Fukushima disaster, a seismologist provided testimony on behalf of the plaintiffs.

Kunihiko Shimazaki, a professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo, once served as a deputy chairman of the Nuclear Regulation Authority. He was also in charge of compiling the 2002 long-term appraisal for the government.

“The height of a likely tsunami could have been known if it was calculated based on that appraisal,” Shimazaki said in court. “Even if a specific forecast could not be made, some sort of countermeasure could have been taken.”

The defendants argued that the long-term appraisal did not provide a specific basis for predicting a tsunami and only pointed to the fact that a magnitude-8 level earthquake occurring could not be ruled out.

Nobel Peace Prize: What will the impact be?

October 7, 2017

ICAN receives Nobel Peace Prize, propels anti-nuke movement to global stage

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171007/p2a/00m/0na/014000c#cxrecs_s

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded Oct. 6 to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which was instrumental in the passage this past July of a United Nations treaty outlawing nuclear weapons.

- **【Related】** Nobel Peace Prize is also for 'hibakusha': ICAN chief
- **【Related】** Nobel Peace Prize awarded to anti-nuclear campaign group
- **【Related】** NGOs shine at anti-nuclear weapon U.N. conference in New York
- **【Related】** Hibakusha: A-bomb survivor concerned over changing America

Seventy-two years after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it was the desperate appeals of atomic bomb survivors, or hibakusha, that created momentum for the international campaign to ban nuclear weapons.

The elderly hibakusha with whom ICAN chief Beatrice Fihn said she wanted to attend the award ceremony celebrated the news and renewed their resolve to keep pushing to make a world without nuclear weapons a reality.

Shortly after 6 p.m. Japan time on Oct. 6, the Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-Bomb Sufferers Organization held a press conference at their office in Hiroshima's Naka Ward. "I'm happy that an organization that is working to abolish nuclear weapons has been awarded the prize," deputy chairman Tomoyuki Mimaki, 75, said. "We want to pass on our work to them so that they can realize a world without nuclear weapons."

Mimaki was in the gallery when the negotiations for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons were held at the U.N. Headquarters in New York in June. "ICAN are our comrades," he said. "The awarding of the Peace Prize to the organization makes a whole lot of sense."

The average age of hibakusha from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings is now over 81. Mimaki added, "I hope that ICAN and other organizations whose core members are young people will take over the movement now, and create a peaceful world without nuclear weapons."

Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-Bomb Sufferers Organizations chairman Sunao Tsuboi, 92, released a comment reading, "Along with everyone at ICAN and others around the world, I will continue calling for the realization of a peaceful world without nuclear weapons as long as I live."

Responding to the news of ICAN's Nobel Peace Prize victory, 72-year-old Kunihiro Sakuma, chairman of the Hiroshima chapter of the Japan Confederation of A- and H- Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo), wondered what the Japanese government thought of the news as that of the only country that has been attacked with nuclear weapons. He said, "A global push for a treaty led to its passage. It's time for the Japanese government to change its stance."

Minoru Hataguchi, 71, the last hibakusha to serve as director of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, was exposed to radiation from the bomb in utero. He learned that ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on television at his home in the Hiroshima Prefectural city of Hatsukaichi. "I hope that Japan, which is the only atomic-bombed country but did not sign the treaty, will move in a better direction."

Having been exposed to the atomic bomb when he was 4 years old, 76-year-old Yoshihide Yamakawa is calling for the establishment of a group to promote the "Hibakusha Appeal," an international petition calling for the banning of nuclear weapons that is now led by Nihon Hidankyo and others. He is certified as having atomic-bomb disease, and on the very day that ICAN won the Nobel Peace Prize, he had gone to the hospital for a regular checkup. Asked about the announcement, he said, "My doctor told me not to exert myself too much, but when, if not now, do we push forward with the petition?"

Koko Kondo, 72, who was exposed to the bomb when she was just 8 months old, said, "Regardless of the fact that Japan is under the nuclear umbrella (of the United States), it should be able to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons with head held high as the country that experienced the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

"ICAN worked as hard as it could toward the passage of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and we worked with them," Terumi Tanaka, the 85-year-old secretary-general of Nihon Hidankyo, said. "Further global unity will be crucial in actually abolishing nuclear weapons, and this award will give the movement more momentum." On Oct. 6, Tanaka had been watching the announcements of the Nobel Prize

online at the Tokyo office of the Nihon Hidankyo with the organization's adviser, Mikiso Iwasa, 88. Addressing the fact that the Peace Prize was awarded to ICAN and not Nihon Hidankyo, Tanaka said, "Having worked so hard for so long, I'm a bit disappointed. I'm feeling a combination of both happiness and disappointment."

Tanaka reflected on the anti-nuke movement thus far and said, "I think ICAN contributed greatly in enlarging the movement on a global scale." As for the impact of ICAN being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize shortly after passage of the U.N. treaty, he said, "I think that nuclear nations and their allies, including Japan, are in shock."

Meanwhile, Iwasa said, "We as hibakusha would like to have received the prize, but the Nobel committee likely awarded ICAN in the sense that it made the movement larger." He continued, "For 72 years, I have been calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, but we hibakusha alone could not have transformed our hopes into a treaty. And now that movement is growing ever larger."

Jackson Browne's anti-nuke message (and songs)

Singer Jackson Browne highlights nuclear dangers ahead of Japan concert

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171017/p2a/00m/0na/015000c#cxrecs_s

October 17, 2017 (Mainichi Japan)

Jackson Browne, an American singer-songwriter with an anti-nuclear message, is gearing up for his first performance in Japan in 2 1/2 years.

Browne, 69, is set to play at Bunkamura Orchard Hall in Tokyo's Shibuya district on the evening of Oct. 17. A representative singer of the U.S. West Coast, Browne played a leading role in the "No Nukes" concerts held in New York in September 1979 -- the first anti-nuclear rock concerts staged after the Three Mile Island nuclear accident earlier that year.

In a Tokyo concert on March 11, 2015, four years after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that triggered the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Browne chose for his last song a number titled "Before the Deluge," which hints at nuclear conflict. He dedicated it to the people fighting damage from the nuclear accident. Browne had played the same song in 1979 at No Nukes, which also featured the Doobie Brothers and Bruce Springsteen among other artists.

He said the song, which came out before the Three Mile Island accident, was not just about nuclear war. "It was compounding ecological disasters, not just nuclear, but also famine and epidemics." As for the prediction of such disasters, he added that there was "no pleasure, no pride, for being right."

In the summer after the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Browne paid special attention to Japan, and held his first anti-nuclear power plant and support concert in 32 years between the anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

He said he was relieved the previous time he came to Japan, as the Fukushima disaster was being reported extensively. He said that in his country, he didn't have newspaper stories every day about the ongoing disaster in Japan and had been told before coming that people were afraid to bring it up.

"I was surprised that there were so many articles," he said.

Recently, however, there has been a strong tide running against the "world without nuclear weapons" espoused by former U.S. President Barack Obama with the emergence of his successor, Donald Trump, and the problem of North Korea's development of missiles and nuclear weapons. Separately, the Japanese

government is moving ahead with the reactivation of nuclear reactors in western Japan even though the state of melted nuclear fuel at the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant remains unknown. Browne notes that even if the government and the nuclear plant operator reach an agreement on compensation for those affected by the nuclear disaster, taxpayers would eventually have to foot the bill. "Really no one can make a restitution to people for this country's mistake. In the end there is no country that would insure a nuclear power plant." He expresses reservations about the provocative exchange between North Korea and the United States which seems to toy with the idea of using nukes. Since the 1980s, Browne has been involved in sounding the alarm in social and political circles regarding U.S. foreign policy and the pollution of the oceans through the discarding of waste. The singer-songwriter says "songs can do a lot to raise people's spirits," though he adds, "It's not a complete vehicle for the information you need." He says it is tough work turning current issues into songs, but adds that Japanese listeners warmly support artists who continue their own style of work. Browne will give three performances in Tokyo, and one each in Nagoya, Osaka and Hiroshima, and will be selling his album "The Road East -- Live in Japan."

Pope Francis clearly condemns nuclear deterrence

Pope Francis, in change from predecessors,
condemns nuclear arsenals for deterrence

By Philip Pulella, Reuters, Nov 10 2017

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-vatican-nuclear/pope-in-change-from-predecessors-condemns-nuclear-arsenals-for-deterrence-idUSKBN1DA161>

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Pope Francis appeared to harden the Catholic Church's teaching against nuclear weapons on Friday, saying countries should not stockpile them even for the purpose of deterrence. His remarks, at the start of a disarmament conference that brought 11 Nobel Peace Prize winners to the Vatican, appeared to go further than previous popes. They have said that while nuclear weapons should never be used, holding arsenals solely to deter other countries from using them could be morally acceptable as a step toward achieving a nuclear-free world.

Addressing the group in the 16th century frescoed Clementine Hall of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace, Francis spoke of "the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of any employment of nuclear devices".

He added: "If we also take into account the risk of an accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned."

As tensions between the United States and North Korea have increased, the pope has often warned that a nuclear conflict would destroy a good part of humanity and called for a third country to mediate the dispute.

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As tensions between the United States and North Korea have increased, the pope has often warned that a nuclear conflict would destroy a good part of humanity and called for a third country to mediate the dispute.

He also said international laws against proliferation of nuclear weapons had not kept new states from acquiring them. Money used to develop or modernize weapons should instead be spent on helping the poor and protecting the environment.

Douglas Roche, Canada's former Ambassador for Disarmament and a former senator, told the conference the pope's remarks against possession of nuclear weapons were "historic" and asked national conferences of Catholic bishops to work to make it known.

Another participant suggested the pope should write an encyclical letter addressed to all Catholics on the moral imperative to ban nuclear weapons.

Among those who met the pope were Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and Mohamed El Baradei, director general emeritus of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Fihn, whose group won the Nobel this year, told Reuters she asked the pope to lead all 1.2 billion Catholics around the world in prayer for an end to the threat of nuclear weapons on Sunday, December 10, when her group is due to collect the prize.

"Tensions are really high and the risks for nuclear weapons' use is higher than at the height of the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis. I think that's really serious and we need to urgently do something about this," she said.

El Baradei, who won the peace prize in 2015, was asked how he would respond to U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to use unprecedented "fire and fury" against North Korea if it threatened the United States.

"I go to pray," he said.

Plant lifespan extension : "Equivalent to being irresponsible"

November 22, 2017

Concerns raised after utility announces plan for nuclear reactor lifespan extension

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171122/p2a/00m/0na/020000c#cxrecs_s

MITO -- The announcement by the Japan Atomic Power Co. (JAPC) that the embattled nuclear power operator will apply for a 20-year extension of the 40-year operational lifespan for a reactor at its Tokai No. 2 Power Station in Ibaraki Prefecture has raised concerns from local residents.

- 【Related】 Nuclear plant operator to request 20-year extension for 'boiling water reactor'
- 【Related】 Japan to require new cooling system for boiling water reactors
- 【Related】 Nuclear regulator does dizzying U-turn on TEPCO reactor restart plans

The Tokai No. 2 plant hosts a "boiling water reactor," the same type as those at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant that melted down in the wake of the 2011 disaster. While JAPC President Mamoru Muramatsu stresses that applying for the extension and reactivating the currently idled reactor at the power station are different issues, residents of the Ibaraki Prefecture village of Tokai, where the plant is located, are expressing concerns about the aging nuclear station.

In response to Muramatsu's briefing about the company's plan on Nov. 21, Ibaraki Gov. Kazuhiko Oigawa and Tokai Mayor Osamu Yamada said they would decide whether to give the green light to restarting the reactor after studying the screening results by the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

The JAPC's business is struggling as none of its nuclear plants are currently in operation. Its plan to restart the Tokai No. 2 station has also met with difficulties as the estimated costs to implement safety measures, such as anti-liquefaction work on coastal levees at the plant, have surged from the initial estimate of 78 billion yen to roughly 180 billion yen.

Former Tokai Mayor Tatsuya Murakami doubts the JAPC president's claim, pointing out that there is no way the utility will not restart the reactor while applying for the extension.

Furthermore, work to create **evacuation plans**, required for local governments located within 30 kilometers from a nuclear power plant, is facing serious challenges as some 1 million people live within a 30-kilometer range from the Tokai No. 2 station -- the largest population in the same area size from any nuclear plant in the country.

"To continue operating the nuclear plant in an abnormal location (with a population of 1 million within 30 kilometers) is disregarding residents. This is equivalent to being irresponsible,"

Murakami said.

Koshi Abe, a Tokai Village Assemblyman who is opposed to reactivating the Tokai nuclear plant, was wary of the utility's plan, saying that the restart will be carried out while local residents have no means of knowing what goes on behind closed doors.

Mika Tsubata, 46, another Tokai resident, expressed concerns, telling the Mainichi Shimbun, "I still remember the (2011) disaster. **It's scary for the same type of nuclear reactor (as the ones at the Fukushima plant) to be put into operation while the cause (of the meltdown) has not been determined.**"

High Court orders shutdown of Ikata No.3 (Part 2)



Lawyers hold up signs outside the Hiroshima High Court on Dec. 13 proclaiming an injunction had been ordered on operations at the Ikata nuclear power plant. (Koichi Ueda)

December 13, 2017

For 1st time, a high court rules against nuclear plant operations

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201712130050.html>

By KEI KOBAYASHI/ Staff Writer

HIROSHIMA--A high court for the first time has banned operations at a nuclear power plant.

The Hiroshima High Court issued the injunction in a verdict Dec. 13 that applies to the No. 3 reactor at the Ikata nuclear power plant in Ikata, Ehime Prefecture, operated by Shikoku Electric Power Co.

In the ruling, the high court concluded there was a chance the Ikata plant could be affected by a pyroclastic flow from Mount Aso if an eruption occurred similar in scale to a massive one 90,000 years ago on the southern island of Kyushu.

A computer simulation by Shikoku Electric of the possible effects from an eruption like the one in ancient times showed there was a possibility of a pyroclastic flow reaching the grounds of the Ikata plant.

The high court concluded that the Ikata plant was located in an inappropriate location and that the Nuclear Regulation Authority's decision that new safety standards had been met was not rational.

The company suspended operations in October to carry out a periodic inspection. If a judicial decision overturning the Dec. 13 high court ruling is not issued, the Ikata reactor will not be able to resume operations--even if the inspection is completed without problems.

For that reason, the latest ruling could affect the government's plans to resume operations at other nuclear plants more than six years after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. An official with Shikoku Electric Power labeled the court injunction as "extremely regrettable" and lamented the fact that it did not accept the company's assertion that the plant is safe.

"The verdict is unacceptable," the official said.

The utility plans to initiate procedures immediately to have the injunction suspended.

The injunction request was made by four residents of Hiroshima and Matsuyama cities.

Among the main points of contention before the high court were the rationality of new safety standards approved by the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear

disaster; the rationality behind the expected maximum strength of an earthquake for the area; and an evaluation of the effect of volcanic ash on the reactor's operations.

While district courts have issued injunctions on operations at other plants, higher courts have overturned all those verdicts until now.

For example, the Fukui District Court in April 2015 and the Otsu District Court in March 2016 ordered operations stopped at the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors of the Takahama nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture operated by Kansai Electric Power Co., but those verdicts were later overturned.

Hiroshima High Court orders suspension of Ikata nuclear reactor in Ehime Prefecture, revoking district court ruling

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/12/13/national/crime-legal/hiroshima-high-court-orders-suspension-ikata-nuclear-reactor-ehime-prefecture-revoking-district-court-ruling/#.WjD-oHkiGos>
Kyodo

HIROSHIMA – The Hiroshima High Court on Wednesday revoked a lower court decision and ordered the suspension of a nuclear reactor at Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata power plant in Ehime Prefecture, dealing a blow to the government and utilities that are aiming to bring more reactors back online.

The high court suspension order — the first in a series of similar injunctions — mandates that the plant operator shutter the No. 3 unit at the Ikata power plant until the end of September next year.

The ruling blocks the planned resumption in January of the unit, which is currently offline for regular checks after it was restarted in August 2016.

Shikoku Electric said the court's decision is "unacceptable" and plans to file an appeal.

The court questioned a decision by the Nuclear Regulation Authority that potential risks associated with volcanic eruptions would not breach the stricter regulations introduced following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear crisis.

"Specific threats to the lives and health of residents are anticipated," the court said.

The latest decision follows a ruling by Otsu District Court in March 2016 that ordered Kansai Electric Power Co. to suspend two reactivated nuclear reactors at its Takahama plant. The district court decision was later overturned by the Osaka High Court.

The Fukushima nuclear crisis led to a nationwide halt of nuclear plants, but the government is looking to produce 20 to 22 percent of the country's electricity supply using nuclear power by 2030.

The focal points of Hiroshima High Court's decision Wednesday included whether estimates by the plant operator, Shikoku Electric Power Co., of the potential size of possible earthquakes, were reasonable, and whether safety screening conducted under stricter regulations set after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster was credible.

Risks predicted in the event of a nuclear accident or natural disasters such as a volcanic eruptions were also contested.

The plaintiffs claimed that in calculating the size of a potential earthquake, the utility had underestimated the fact that the reactor lies above the epicenter of an anticipated Nankai Trough mega-quake, and that it is located near a geologic fault.

They added that the post-Fukushima regulations cannot ensure safety, and that major damage could occur at the time of an accident or disaster because the regulations were compiled without thoroughly determining the cause of the 2011 disaster.

But Shikoku Electric maintains that it has ensured safety and that there is no danger.

Hirofumi Kawai, the lawyer representing the plaintiffs said, "Our plea was understood. We could protect the Seto Inland Sea. It is our victory."

The plaintiffs had said that if the Ikata plant, which faces the Seto Inland Sea, was to be severely damaged, nuclear substances could spread and contaminate waters in the area.

In March, the Hiroshima District Court found that the new regulations set by the Nuclear Regulation Authority and Shikoku Electric's estimates of a possible earthquake and tsunami were reasonable.

The district court had turned down the request to halt the reactor, saying, "There is no specific risk that residents will suffer severe damage due to radioactive exposure associated with an accident."

Following the checks, Shikoku Electric had been expected to bring the reactor back online on Jan. 22 and resume operations on Feb. 20.

The plaintiffs were four residents from Matsuyama in Ehime and Hiroshima, located on the opposite side of the Seto Inland Sea to the nuclear plant. Similar injunctions have been contested at the Takamatsu High Court, Oita District Court and the Iwakuni branch of Yamaguchi District Court.

Koizumi to announce zero nuclear power policy (Genjiren)

December 22, 2017

Koizumi to introduce 'bill' to abandon nuclear energy

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201712220043.html>

Former prime minister and anti-nuclear exponent Junichiro Koizumi is expected to announce a "bill" abandoning nuclear power plants and promoting natural energy next month.

Genjiren (an acronym for the confederation of zero nuclear power plants and the promotion of natural energy), a private organization headed by Tsuyoshi Yoshiwara, former president of Johnan Shinkin Bank, drafted the proposal for the zero nuclear power policy.

Koizumi, an adviser to Genjiren, will request both ruling and opposition parties to provide assistance. The policy states that nuclear power plants should not be restarted and renewable energy resources should be increased.

Koizumi, who has been calling for abandoning nuclear power at public lectures across the country, is scheduled to make an announcement together with Morihiro Hosokawa, also a former prime minister, on Jan. 10.

"It might be difficult (to reach the goal) under the Abe administration, but we are determined to fulfill the project of zero nuclear power plants in the near future. Public sentiment that opposes the restart of nuclear power plants is much larger (than that of pro-nuclear power)," Koizumi has reportedly told his confidantes.

He also often says, "Japan can get along with zero nuclear power plants."

The main opposition in the Lower House Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP) aims to submit a bill calling for no nuclear power plants to the Diet.

"We are in the phase where specific processes (toward zero nuclear power) are questioned," said CDP leader Yukio Edano.

The CDP is expected to compile measures that can be taken for local governments hosting nuclear facilities to prepare them for transition to a phaseout of nuclear energy and the schedule of disposal of spent nuclear fuel.

Kashiwazaki-Kariwa OK'ed but restart might take years

December 27, 2017

Tepco nuclear reactors pass safety review, 1st after Fukushima crisis

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171227/p2g/00m/0dm/051000c#cxrecs_s

TOKYO (Kyodo) -- Two reactors Japan were cleared for reactivation by the nuclear regulator on Wednesday, becoming the first run by the operator of the crippled Fukushima power plant to formally clear stricter government safety standards imposed after the 2011 crisis.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority endorsed safety measures for the Nos. 6 and 7 reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa power plant in Niigata Prefecture at a meeting that was open to the public, with some members of the audience shouting their disapproval. The decision paves the way for the restart of the two reactors by Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings Inc., known as Tepco.

However, the process of reactivating the reactors straddling the municipalities of Kashiwazaki and Kariwa in Niigata on the Sea of Japan coast could still take several more years as local governments need to give their consent.

Niigata Gov. Ryuichi Yoneyama, who has said it will take "at least three to four years" before he can decide on whether to approve the restart of the reactors, issued a statement saying he wants to be briefed on the plan and "examine the outcome of (the NRA) review."

The two units are boiling water reactors, the same as those that suffered meltdowns during the Fukushima crisis triggered by the massive March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan. No BWRs had previously cleared Japan's tougher safety standards imposed after the disaster, partly because major refurbishments are required for added safety.

The NRA's approval of the two units brings the total number of reactors that have cleared the post-crisis safety regulations to 14, with the Japanese government pushing to restart nuclear plants that were taken offline after the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi complex, the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

In addition to assessing the usual technical requirements, the NRA focused on whether Tepco is qualified to operate a nuclear power plant, as it continues to struggle with scrapping the Fukushima Daiichi complex -- an effort expected to take until around 2051 -- and dealing with contaminated water at the plant where radiation levels remain high.

Of around 800 public comments received by the regulator regarding its assessment of the Tepco reactors, about half of them questioned Tepco's qualification to run nuclear plants, according to the NRA.

At Wednesday's meeting, some of the members of the public voiced opposition, with one person saying, "It is not a technical or scientific assessment, but a political one."

In front of the building housing the NRA in Tokyo, civic group members gathered to protest the approval. Yoshinari Usui, a former public official from Kawasaki near Tokyo, said, "Tepco has no technical qualifications to run a nuclear power plant after causing such an accident. The restart of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa units is totally unacceptable."

Han Kumata, 37, from Tokyo said, "I have absolutely no trust in Tepco even if it says it has implemented safety measures."

As a condition for gaining safety clearance, Tepco agreed to a request from the regulator to provide a safety pledge in its legally binding plant operation program.

The NRA says it can continue to monitor Tepco by conducting inspections and order the halt of operations if it finds any safety violations.

Facing huge compensation payments and other costs stemming from the Fukushima crisis, Tepco has been keen to resume operation of its reactors to reduce dependence on costly fossil fuel imports for non-nuclear thermal power generation.

Not all residents of Niigata oppose nuclear power, given its economic benefits.

"There may be risks but the local (municipality) cannot stand without nuclear power. I want the reactors to be restarted if they have been deemed safe," said Toru Murata from Kashiwazaki, who works in the construction industry.

A Niigata city resident Mie Kuwabara, 69, on the other hand expressed concern about the reactors coming back online, saying, "I think the possibility of a serious accident still remains," considering past problems at the plant including insufficient quake resistance of a building to be used as an emergency headquarters. The two reactors are the newest among the seven units at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant. The complex is one of the world's largest nuclear power plants, with a combined output capacity of 8.2 million kilowatts.

TEPCO reactors in Niigata OK'd, but restarts may still take years

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201712270026.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Japan's nuclear watchdog approved safety standards at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture, but **the governor wants answers about the 2011 Fukushima disaster before the company can restart any reactor.**

After questioning TEPCO's commitment to safety, the Nuclear Regulation Authority on Dec. 27 gave its stamp of approval for the No. 6 and No. 7 reactors at its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant.

It was the NRA's first approval of boiling-water reactors since the 2011 accident at TEPCO's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, which operated the same type of reactor.

However, the Niigata prefectural government is unlikely to approve the reactor restarts at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant until three or four years down the road.

Niigata Governor Ryuichi Yoneyama, whose approval is required for the resumption of reactor operations, has stated that he would not make a decision until the prefectural government completes its own assessment of the Fukushima nuclear accident.

Members of the public have also vehemently opposed allowing TEPCO to operate nuclear facilities. Doubts were raised within the NRA on whether TEPCO was fit as a company to run a nuclear plant, considering the scale of the disaster in Fukushima Prefecture.

NRA officials in July asked TEPCO executives to appear at a meeting and explain their attitude toward safety.

In August, TEPCO submitted a document to the NRA that said in part: "We are prepared to go through with decommissioning the reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 plant. We will not place priority on economic interests over safety."

The NRA compiled its draft inspection document in October. NRA officials said they will confirm TEPCO's safety stance during screening of more specific measures designed for safety, which include an explanation of plant operating procedures.

The nuclear watchdog allowed the public to submit their views on the inspection document over a 30-day period.

At the NRA meeting on Dec. 27, 904 views were made public.

NRA officials said several hundred opinions were opposed to having TEPCO resume operations at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant. Some argued that the utility had not improved its corporate posture. Others said the inspection document contained little in the way of specific plans for how TEPCO would go about ensuring safety.

But the NRA approved the document on the grounds that it would still have the opportunity to judge TEPCO's fitness during the safety screening. The utility will submit specific safety measures as the next step in the process toward resuming operations of the two reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant. (This article was written by Yusuke Ogawa and Masanobu Higashiyama.)

Kashiwazaki-Kariwa: Local governments remain divided

December 28, 2017

Local gov'ts of areas hosting nuke plant in Niigata Pref. divided over reactivation

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171228/p2a/00m/0na/008000c#cxrecs_s

NIIGATA -- There are no prospects that two reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant, which have passed a safety review by the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA), will be restarted in the foreseeable future, as local bodies hosting the plant remain divided over the issue.

- **【Related】** TEPCO nuclear reactors pass safety review, 1st after Fukushima crisis
- **【Related】** 60 holes at Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuke plant found unfilled in violation of building code
- **【Related】** Environmental economics expert questions clearing of TEPCO reactors in safety review

Niigata Gov. Ryuichi Yoneyama, on the other hand, remains cautious about the resumption of the units' operations.

Gov. Yoneyama told Masaya Kitta, head of TEPCO's Niigata regional headquarters who visited the governor on Dec. 27 that the prefectural government cannot agree on the early reactivation of the plant. "I have no intention of objecting to the decision by the NRA, but our position is that we can't start talks on reactivation unless our examination of three-point checks progresses," Yoneyama told Kitta. The governor was referring to his policy of not sitting at the negotiation table over reactivation unless three points are examined by the prefectural government: the cause of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, potential effects on people's livelihoods as well as health in case of an accident, and safe evacuation measures. He has stated that it would take two to three years to complete the checks of these points.

The governor also told Kitta, "Our examination will never be affected" by the NRA's judgment that the plant meets the new safety standards. Moreover, the prefectural government is poised to independently examine the outcome of the NRA's safety review of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa power station.

Kashiwazaki Mayor Masahiro Sakurai and Kariwa Mayor Hiroo Shinada were separately briefed by plant manager Chikashi Shitara on the outcome of the NRA safety review of the facility.

Both mayors have expressed their appreciation for TEPCO's response up to this point, and Sakurai urged the power company to "make efforts to reassure local residents (about the nuclear plant)," while Shinada urged the utility to "try to provide information in an appropriate manner."

In the meantime, if the reactivation of the atomic power station is to be delayed, there is a possibility that the national government's grants to the host municipalities will be reduced.

The Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry is continuing to provide such grants to local bodies hosting idled nuclear plants by deeming them to be running plants in some form. In April 2016, the national government revised its rules on grants to nuclear plant host municipalities and decided to reduce the amount of funding if the facilities are not restarted within nine months after the completion of the NRA's safety review, which is necessary for reactivation.

The No. 6 and 7 reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant need to pass two more inspections within a year. If it takes several years to form a consensus among the local governments concerned, however, grants will be reduced in fiscal 2020 at the earliest. The amounts of reductions are estimated at some 400 million yen for Kariwa, about 100 million yen for Kashiwazaki and approximately 740 million yen for Niigata Prefecture.

Request for injunction against Ohi restart

December 26, 2017

2 residents file request for temporary injunction against Oi nuke plant restart

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20171226/p2a/00m/0na/002000c>

OSAKA -- Two people from Fukui and Kyoto prefectures filed a request with the Osaka District Court on Dec. 25 for a temporary injunction against the restart of reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant.

- 【Related】 Kansai Electric decides to scrap 2 old nuclear reactors
- 【Related】 Kobe Steel data cheating to delay restart of 4 reactors for 2 months
- 【Related】 Residents protest Fukui governor, Oi mayor's approval of nuke plant restart

Operator Kansai Electric Power Co. is aiming to turn the No. 3 and 4 reactors at the plant in Oi, Fukui Prefecture, back on in spring 2018.

The restart is already being challenged in four other court cases filed by residents; three in district courts and one that has reached a high court branch. All four are lawsuits, not requests for provisional injunctions. Therefore, even if the plaintiffs win their cases, the Oi plant restart cannot be stopped until the verdict has been finalized through the appeals process.

With the reactors' projected restart just months away, the pair from Kyoto and Fukui prefectures decided to file for the temporary injunction, which would take effect immediately if granted.

Kansai Electric declined to comment on the filing, saying a copy had not yet arrived at their offices.

Koizumi supports bill aiming at zero nukes

It seems that the anti-nuke movement in Japan has taken a major step forward with former PM Koizumi's backing for a Diet bill to quickly bring Japan to "zero nukes".

January 10, 2017

Junichiro Koizumi-led group pitches bill calling for ‘immediate halt’ to Japan’s reliance on nuclear power

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/01/10/national/politics-diplomacy/junichiro-koizumi-led-group-pitches-bill-calling-immediate-halt-japans-reliance-nuclear-power/#.Wlo1mHkiGot>

by Tomohiro Osaki

Staff Writer

A group advised by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Wednesday unveiled details about a bill calling for an “immediate halt” to Japan’s reliance on nuclear power to prevent a recurrence of the 2011 Fukushima disaster. The group is seeking to submit the bill to an upcoming Diet session in cooperation with opposition parties.

Sporting his signature leonine hairdo, Koizumi, one of Japan’s most popular prime ministers in recent memory, made a rare appearance before reporters with his unabated frankness, lashing out at Prime Minister Shinzo Abe over his persistent pro-nuclear stance.

“You may think the goal of zero nuclear power is hard to achieve, but it’s not,” Koizumi said, adding that he believes many lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party support nuclear power passively out of respect for Abe, but that they could be persuaded to embrace a zero-nuclear policy under a different leader.

“Judging from his past remarks, I don’t think we can realize zero nuclear power as long as Abe remains in power. But I do think we can make it happen if he is replaced by a prime minister willing to listen to the public,” Koizumi told a packed news conference organized by Genjiren, an anti-nuclear association for which he serves as an adviser along with Morihiro Hosokawa, another former prime minister.

Claiming that the March 2011 triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant exposed the “extremely dangerous” and “costly” nature of atomic power — with a means of disposing of spent fuel still not in sight — the bill drafted by Genjiren calls for Japan’s “complete switch” to renewable energy.

Specifically, it demands that all active nuclear reactors be switched offline immediately and that those currently idle never be reactivated. It also defines the government’s responsibility to initiate steps toward a mass decommissioning and to map out “foolproof and safe” plans to dispose of spent fuel rods.

The bill sets forth specific numerical targets, too, saying various sources of natural energy, including solar, wind, water and geothermal heat, should occupy more than 50 percent of the nation’s total power supply by 2030 and 100 percent by 2050.

That Japan has experienced no mass power shortage following the shutdown of all 48 reactors in the wake of the 2011 crisis, except for a handful since reactivated, is in itself a testament to the fact that “we can get by without nuclear power,” Koizumi said.

A 2017 white paper by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry shows Japan’s reliance on nuclear power has plunged to a mere 1 percent after the Fukushima meltdowns. The vast majority of Japan’s power is supplied by sources such as liquefied natural gas, coal and oil.

Although the controversy over nuclear power has rarely emerged as a priority in recent parliamentary debates, the creation of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan may herald a breakthrough.

Later Wednesday, Genjiren pitched the bill to the CDP in a meeting with some of its members, including former Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who was in power when the Fukushima crisis erupted.

The CDP seeks to submit its own “zero nuclear power” bill to a regular Diet session slated to kick off later this month, positioning itself as a clearer anti-nuclear alternative to Abe’s ruling party than its predecessor, the Democratic Party.

The DP, which until recently held the most seats among opposition parties in both houses of the Diet, had failed to go all-out in crusading against nuclear power under the previous leadership of Renho, who goes by only one name.

At a party convention last March, Renho balked at adopting an ambitious target of slashing Japan’s reliance on nuclear power to zero by 2030 after reportedly facing resistance from party members beholden to the support of electricity industry unions.

In a preliminary draft unveiled Wednesday, the CDP’s bill-in-the-making called for ridding Japan of nuclear power “as soon as possible.”

For memory:

Koizumi’s nuclear power questions

- Nov 11, 2013

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2013/11/11/editorials/koizumis-nuclear-power-questions/#.Wlo2dnkiGot>

While political repercussions continue over former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s surprise calls for ending nuclear power generation in Japan, what the once popular leader points out are all sensible and legitimate questions about Japan’s energy policy that remain unanswered by members of the Abe administration. Any energy policy that fails to squarely answer the questions posed by Koizumi will not have any credibility.

Koizumi, who kept largely out of the media spotlight after retiring as lawmaker in 2009, has been speaking out in recent months that Japan should end its reliance on nuclear power. He says the Fukushima nuclear disaster changed his perception of nuclear power as a low-cost and safe source of energy and now says, “There is nothing more costly than nuclear power.” He urges the government to divert the massive energy and money needed to maintain nuclear power in Japan into more investments in the development and promotion of renewable energy sources.

Many of his former Liberal Democratic Party colleagues initially tried to dismiss Koizumi as a retired politician who has nothing to do with the party today. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who served in key Cabinet and LDP positions during Koizumi’s 2001-2006 rule, said it is “irresponsible” to commit to ending nuclear energy at this point. Meanwhile, hopes have emerged within the opposition camp that an alliance with Koizumi — who drew strong popular support while in office — on the zero nuclear agenda could provide them with ammunition against the LDP’s dominance in the Diet.

The political ripple effects — and some criticism over his flip-flop after promoting nuclear power while in office — aside, what seems missing in the controversy are discussions on the very real and pressing issues highlighted by Koizumi. He points to poor prospects for finding a permanent storage site for highly radioactive waste after spent fuel is reprocessed. This problem — for which Japan’s nuclear power

industry has long been likened to a “condominium without a toilet” — has been set aside since well before the Fukushima crisis.

Abe has told the Diet that a technology has been established to store such waste in geological layers deep underground. Koizumi says the problem is that despite the existence of this technology, the government has been unable for more than a decade to find a candidate site anywhere in Japan. And this technology, Koizumi says, might be problematic in this quake-prone country — a point that Abe conveniently neglects to mention. Given the safety concerns over nuclear power following the triple meltdowns at the Fukushima plant, it is even more doubtful that a candidate site will ever be found, Koizumi says. Thus radioactive waste will continue to pile up as long as nuclear power plants are operated.

Japan’s nuclear fuel cycle program is at a standstill. Completion of a fuel reprocessing plant in Rokkasho, Aomori Prefecture, has been delayed for years, and the Monju fast-breeder reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, has been idled for much of the time since a sodium leak and fire in 1995. Meanwhile, storage space for spent nuclear fuel from reactors around the country, and in the Rokkasho complex, is nearly 70 percent full.

As Koizumi points out, the myth that nuclear power is cheaper than other sources of energy is thrown in doubt when the expenses for siting nuclear plants, their future decommissioning and waste disposal are included. And on top of this there is the massive cost of dealing with the aftermath of the Fukushima No. 1 meltdowns, including compensation, which far exceeds the financial capacity of its operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co. This is necessitating the injection of a huge amount of taxpayer money.

Abe’s rebuttal is that increased fossil fuel imports for thermal power generation to make up for the nuclear plant shutdowns is costing the nation trillions of yen a year. But his rhetoric does not answer the question whether nuclear power is really the affordable source of energy — as it has long been touted to be by the government — especially after the costs of compensation and decontamination in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear crisis are taken into account.

Abe has vowed to scrap the nuclear phaseout policy of the Democratic Party of Japan-led administration that his LDP ousted from power last year. But the prime minister has yet to present a new vision for the nation’s energy policy — except to say that he would reduce as much as possible Japan’s reliance on nuclear power while maximizing energy-saving efforts and development of alternative energy.

While the future of Japan’s energy policy remains elusive and the Fukushima nuclear crisis is continuing, Abe has been pushing for the sale of Japanese nuclear power plant technology overseas as part of his bid to boost infrastructure exports. When Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and France’s Areva clinched a joint-venture deal in October to build a nuclear power plant with four advanced reactors in Turkey, Abe said Japan “is responsible for helping improve the safety of atomic power in the world by sharing the experience and lessons” from the disaster at the Fukushima plant — whose situation he has described as “under control.”

At home the Abe administration and the LDP are pushing for the restart of some idled nuclear reactors once they have cleared a new set of safety criteria, even though radiation-contaminated water continues to leak from the Fukushima compound nearly 2½ years after the meltdowns.

Abe should lay out a new energy vision that will fully address the doubts about nuclear power raised by Koizumi. His legitimate concerns are likely shared by a large part of the public — a majority of whom, according to media surveys, oppose restart of the idled nuclear reactors. As Koizumi says, only Japan's political leaders can set the direction for the nation's energy policy. The Abe administration has an obligation to choose a path that ensures Japan will not have to contend with another nuclear power plant disaster in the future.

Two ex-prime ministers team up on 'bill' to end nuclear power

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201801110038.html>

By AKIRA MINAMI/ Staff Writer

Former Prime Ministers Junichiro Koizumi and Morihiro Hosokawa on Jan. 10 announced the drafting of a "bill" to immediately halt all nuclear power plants in Japan and require electricity needs to be met with renewable sources by 2050.

In a news conference, Koizumi said while it would be difficult phasing out nuclear energy under the Abe administration, the proposal would pave the way for a major shift in the country's energy policy.

"We will definitely abolish all nuclear plants in the near future with support from a majority of the public," said Koizumi, who has been campaigning to reduce Japan's nuclear dependency to zero.

"Once the bill begins to be discussed in the Diet, citizens will be awakened (to face the nuclear issue)."

The bill was drafted by the confederation for scrapping nuclear plants and promoting natural energy (Genjiren). Koizumi and Hosokawa serve as advisers for the group, which is headed by Tsuyoshi Yoshiwara, former president of Johnan Shinkin Bank.

Koizumi emphasized his intention to build closer ties with the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), an opposition party that aims to introduce a zero nuclear plant bill.

Other pillars of Koizumi and Hosokawa's bill include a ban on resuming operations of existing nuclear reactors and building new ones, withdrawal from the nuclear fuel recycling project and a freeze of nuclear plant exports.

After the news conference, Genjiren called on CDP members to reconsider their planned bill that would exceptionally allow nuclear plants to resume operations in an emergency, such as when Japan cannot import oil.

"The name of the game is the immediate halt on nuclear plants," said lawyer Hiroyuki Kawai, secretary-general of Genjiren.

The group is scheduled to discuss the issue with Kibō no Tō (Hope), another opposition party that supports phasing out nuclear energy, on Jan. 12.

"Does Abe understand the significance of ICAN winning the Nobel Peace Prize?"



January 16, 2018

ICAN chief meets activists in Hiroshima

https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/20180116_03/

The head of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, or ICAN, has met with anti-nuclear activists in Hiroshima.

ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn attended a meeting of about 150 people from the atomic-bombed city on Monday.

The event began with a speech by Haruko Moritaki, who co-heads a Hiroshima non-governmental organization.

She said she is counting on the youthful power of ICAN to spread around the world the voices of Hiroshima and the consequences of atomic bombing.

She said non-governmental groups in Hiroshima need to work together to urge Japan's government to join the UN nuclear ban treaty.

Fihn told the audience there is a "large gap" between what people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki believe, and Japanese government policy.

She said the threat of nuclear weapons would continue as long as Tokyo believes in nuclear deterrence.

She added citizens should unite to demand change.

A high school student also delivered a speech, stressing the need to create occasions to make the younger generations think about the nuclear ban treaty.

Moritaki said she wants young Japanese people to take hope and inspiration from ICAN and actively engage in its campaign.

Fihn's organization won last year's Nobel Peace Prize for its contribution to the adoption of the nuclear ban treaty at the United Nations.

A-bomb survivors question denial of ICAN leader's request for meeting with Abe

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180116/p2a/00m/0na/011000c>

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180116/p2a/00m/0na/011000c>

Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the international nongovernmental organization that won last year's Nobel Peace Prize, was denied a meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during her current visit to Japan in spite of her request for one, on the grounds of scheduling difficulties.

- **【Related】** Chief of Nobel-winning antinuke group denied a meeting with PM Abe
- **【Related】** ICAN chief Fihn visits Hiroshima, speaks to A-bomb survivor
- **【Related】** ICAN chief calls on Japan to join treaty banning nuclear weapons

ICAN was instrumental in the adoption of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Japan has not signed this treaty, but even so, calls have arisen from within Japan, the only country to have been attacked with nuclear weapons in warfare, for the prime minister to meet and talk with the ICAN leader.

Prime Minister Abe is scheduled to return from a trip to Eastern Europe on Jan. 17. Fihn arrived in Japan on Jan. 12, is staying in Tokyo on Jan. 16 and 17, and will leave Japan on Jan. 18. Speaking to reporters after a tour of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima on Jan. 15, she expressed disappointment that she had been denied a chance to meet Prime Minister Abe even though she had been able to meet the leaders of other countries. She noted that Japan, in particular, had been subjected to A-bomb attacks in the past, and said she was keen to talk with the prime minister and figures in the Japanese government. Fihn added she looks forward to a meeting at the next opportunity.

The same day, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said in a news conference that denial of the meeting came down to "the fact that it was difficult in terms of schedules, nothing more, nothing less."

ICAN had sent the Cabinet Office two written requests since December last year asking for a meeting between Fihn and the prime minister during her stay in Tokyo. Abe has met Nobel laureates from abroad in the past, including economists Paul Krugman in 2014, Robert Merton in 2015, and Joseph Stiglitz in 2016.

The U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons bans the use, development, testing, production, stationing and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, as well as the threat of their use -- the basis of nuclear deterrence. The accord was adopted in the United Nations in July last year with the majority approval of 122 countries. However, Japan, which is under the protection of the U.S. "nuclear umbrella," did not take part in treaty negotiations.

Fumiko Nishizaki, a professor at the University of Tokyo versed in diplomatic history, commented, "The Japanese government has stressed that its final goal is the elimination of nuclear weapons, and it would be normal to respond to a Nobel laureate with respect.

Adopting the stance of listening to an organization with conflicting views would have raised the profile of the administration, so this is a regrettable decision."

Meanwhile, Tomoyuki Mimaki, 75, representative director of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo), voiced distrust toward the government. "I'm disappointed in the prime minister," he said. "Does the government really think that being under the 'nuclear umbrella' is the best thing?"

Koichi Kawano, 78, chairman of the Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs, commented, "I guess that the prime minister can't confidently give a reason for not participating in the treaty. As an A-bombed country, Japan should be offering a congratulatory message for (ICAN's winning of) the Nobel Peace Prize, but instead it's fleeing without any message."

Masao Tomonaga, 74, honorary director of The Japanese Red Cross Nagasaki Genbaku Hospital, commented, "If scheduling is the issue, then it can't be helped, but the important thing is whether the government accepts Ms. Fihn's message or not."

Both Kawano and Tomonaga are survivors of the Nagasaki atomic bombing.

January 15, 2018

Chief of Nobel-winning antinuke group denied a meeting with PM Abe

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180115/p2g/00m/0dm/060000c#cxrecs_s

HIROSHIMA (Kyodo) -- The leader of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, which won last year's Nobel Peace Prize, has been denied a meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japanese nongovernmental organization Peace Boat said Monday.

ICAN asked the Japanese government twice since late December to arrange a meeting between Abe and Executive Director Beatrice Fihn during her ongoing visit to Japan, but the Foreign Ministry declined the request, citing a scheduling conflict, according to Peace Boat, a major steering group member of the Geneva-based organization.

Expressing disappointment that she would be unable to meet Abe during her first visit to Japan, Fihn said in Hiroshima she wants to talk with him about how the world can avoid a repeat of the devastation inflicted on Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- the two cities atom-bombed by the United States in 1945.

Fihn added she looks forward to meeting with the Japanese prime minister at the next opportunity.

Atomic-bomb survivors, known as hibakusha in Japan, expressed their disappointment.

"Does Prime Minister Abe understand the significance of ICAN winning the Nobel Peace Prize? It is very regrettable to feel this difference of attitudes between the government and atomic-bomb survivors," said Hiroko Kishida, a 77-year-old hibakusha.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, however, told media in Tokyo that a meeting was not arranged "due to a conflict of schedule. Nothing more, nothing less."

Abe departed Japan on Friday for a six-nation European tour and is set to return home on Wednesday.

Fihn arrived in Japan on the same day as Abe's departure.

After visiting Nagasaki through Sunday, she delivered a keynote speech at an event held Monday in Hiroshima where some 340 people, including students and survivors of the atomic bombing, gathered. She said there are divergent views on the U.N. nuke ban treaty between the people who live at the sites of the atomic bombs and the Japanese government and the gap in understanding must be narrowed, stressing all countries' participation in the treaty will be key to resolving the nuclear weapons issue. In Hiroshima, Fihn laid flowers at the Peace Memorial Park's Cenotaph and listened to the testimony of 80-year-old hibakusha Keiko Ogura. Fihn is scheduled to hold discussions with Japanese parliamentarians in Tokyo on Tuesday before leaving Japan on Thursday. ICAN, founded in 2007, is a coalition of NGOs that involves about 470 groups from more than 100 countries.

Koizumi on Article 9 revision and the antinuclear bill

January 18, 2018

Ex-PM Koizumi sees Article 9 revision difficult without cooperation from opposition

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180118/p2a/00m/0na/004000c>

Former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi expressed his view that revising war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution is difficult to achieve under the current state of affairs as the matter requires cooperation from opposition parties, in an interview with the Mainichi Shimbun on Jan. 17.

- **【Related】** Civic group proposes bill for Japan to exit nuclear power
- **【Related】** Abe hopes to advance constitutional amendment debate before 2019
- **【Related】** Abe hints he will decide on whether to run in LDP presidential race in summer

Asked about Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ambition to make changes to the war-renouncing article by 2020, Koizumi said, "Amendments to Article 9 require an environment where a two-thirds majority (of members in both houses of the Diet) would naturally agree to the revisions after discussions with the opposition. It would not happen if forced." He then added that **at the moment Prime Minister Abe and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) do not have the momentum to have opposition forces involved in the discussion.**

In responding to questions regarding Abe's potential candidacy for his third term as LDP president, Koizumi says he does not know anything yet, stating that even Abe is saying himself that he will decide whether to run in the party leadership election scheduled in September this year at the last minute. "When it comes to elections, you can't tell anything beforehand. I lost in the (LDP) leadership race twice and was told I wouldn't succeed in my third challenge, but I did," Koizumi said.

Meanwhile, the former prime minister also talked about the bill that he has proposed to end the use of nuclear power in Japan. Koizumi said in the interview that while he knows anti-nuclear power bills filed by Diet lawmakers will "not pass due to opposition from the LDP," **if the subject is debated at the Diet, it will become clear that "what has been claimed by the pro-nuclear power camp about safety and cost efficiency (of nuclear energy) is a lie."** He continued, "If the people's deep-rooted opposition to nuclear

power could be further evoked, the subject could become a key issue in the next House of Councillors election (in 2019). And in such a case, the LDP would not be able to just sit around and do nothing about it," suggesting his plan to spark a national movement against nuclear power to time with the upper house race.

Phasing out bill should be debated in Diet

February 24, 2018

EDITORIAL: Opposition CDP's zero nuclear bill merits earnest debate in Diet

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201802240020.html>

In what amounts to a direct challenge to the Abe administration, the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan has drafted a bill to phase out nuclear power generation.

The proposal deserves serious consideration by the Diet and should serve as a platform to review the government's frayed energy policy.

The CDP plans to submit the bill to the Diet in March after rallying support from other opposition parties. The central provision would require the government to pursue a policy goal of shutting down all nuclear reactors in Japan within five years after the legislation takes effect.

It proposes an ambitious goal for expanding the use of renewable energy sources, cast as the principal ingredient of the strategy, that far exceeds the target set by the government.

The CDP's bill is a full frontal challenge to the energy policy adopted by the Abe administration and the ruling camp, which views atomic energy as a vital core power source.

Since the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, the Japanese public has shown profound distrust in the government's energy policy. Opinion polls have repeatedly shown a majority are opposed to restarting offline nuclear reactors.

While working on the bill, the CDP held meetings with citizens across Japan to hear their concerns about nuclear power.

The party's move has also been prompted by a powerful global energy trend: the decline of nuclear power and rapid rise of renewable energy.

While many of the elements of the bill make good sense, certain provisions concerning the time frame and process of pursuing the policy goal raise issues that need more careful consideration.

Terminating nuclear power generation within only five years would cause some "side effects." Japan's carbon dioxide emissions will remain at high levels, for instance, due to expanded use of thermal power generation by burning fossil fuels. Growth of renewable power generation could lead to increases in electricity charges.

The CDP's bill doesn't make clear how to tackle these problems, which need to be overcome to push forward without nuclear power.

The party needs to bolster the feasibility of its energy policy proposal by devising specific and convincing steps to deal with these challenges.

The Abe administration is currently working on a new "basic energy plan," a legally mandated medium- to long-term energy policy blueprint.

The advisory council tasked with the work has indicated that the administration intends to maintain its basic energy policy stance, which stresses the importance of making active use of nuclear and coal-burning thermal power generation.

There has been no in-depth policy debate on key challenges facing the nuclear power policy, such as how to dispose of radioactive waste from nuclear power plants and the dismal outlook of the nuclear fuel recycling program. Government policymakers and advisers have also failed to consider seriously how much growth of renewable power generation we can realistically expect.

The Diet, which is composed of elected representatives of the people, has a responsibility to exert pressure on the reluctant government into responding to radical changes in the energy situation. Even though it has an overwhelming majority in both houses of the Diet, the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and Komeito should not be allowed to let the CDP's energy bill wither on the vine. The government's decisions concerning which energy sources should be used in what way directly affect people's lives and that of society.

The submission of the bill should trigger serious and constructive debate between the ruling and opposition camps to lay out a new vision for the nation's energy future and a road map to realize it.

Remembering Hitoshi Yoshioka



Hitoshi Yoshioka (Mainichi)

March 12, 2018

Remembering Hitoshi Yoshioka, who fought gov't nuclear policy from inside

"I feel sorry for the next generation that they must take on the burden of Fukushima. What we have been doing is something we must feel embarrassed about," said Hitoshi Yoshioka at a symposium following the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Those words still linger in me.

- **【Related】** Proponent of nuclear energy phase-out Hitoshi Yoshioka dies at 64

- **【Related】** Future nuclear watchdog chief faces criticism for calling reactor '40-year rule' too short

Yoshioka was a strong opponent of Japan's nuclear energy policy. At 43 years old he took a spot on the committee that decided the government's nuclear policy. He was a unique presence in that he continued to criticize the government from the inside, raising questions over Japan's policy of forging ahead with nuclear power. Perhaps his regret that he was unable to prevent the Fukushima disaster before it unfolded was behind his statement above.

Yoshioka passed away on Jan. 14, 2018, of a hepatic neuroendocrine tumor. He was 64. He studied physics at the University of Tokyo, but upon meeting Tetsu Hiroshige, a history of science expert known for his criticism of the sciences, Yoshioka shifted his focus to the history of science as well.

From the late 1980s, Yoshioka devoted himself to research on nuclear energy. He continued raining down scalding criticism of the civilian use of nuclear energy as a power source, saying that Japan's system was "second-class at best and undeveloped" and that "what the government really wants (with nuclear power) is to maintain the structure of vested interests and the potential capabilities for nuclear weapons."

Yoshioka's book "Genshiryoku no Shakaishi" (The social history of nuclear energy) remains as a sort of bible to those related to the industry.

"Public policies (like nuclear power) do not belong solely to politicians and bureaucrats," Yoshioka would expound. "I would like everyone to do their own investigative research and participate in policy formation." He hoped for the effort of every single citizen to reform government policies. Even when I, someone he barely knew, came to him asking for advice about wanting to summarize my experiences covering the Fukushima nuclear disaster into a dissertation three years ago, he readily provided me with guidance.

As the chairman of the Citizens' Commission on Nuclear Energy, Yoshioka fought for the reconstruction of the lives of those in Fukushima affected by the disaster as the nation's top priority. Also concerned about the global unrest surrounding nuclear weapons, Yoshioka said that nuclear power was just the outer moat, and the total elimination of nuclear arms was the castle keep.

Aiming for a future coexisting with science that could create a "fair society," Yoshioka fought to the very end as an opponent of Japan's nuclear energy policies. (By Shinji Kanto, Saga Bureau)

Governor resigns. What now?

April 19, 2018

Will resignation of key governor weaken Japan's anti-nuclear movement?

by Stephen Stapczynski
Bloomberg

A governor who has been blocking the restart of the world's biggest nuclear power plant in his prefecture has resigned, but **it remains to be seen whether the move will create an opening for the nation's pro-nuclear forces.**

Niigata Gov. Ryuichi Yoneyama, who campaigned on his opposition to restarting Tokyo Electric Power Co. Holding Inc.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa reactors, said Wednesday he would resign over allegations he paid women for sex.

The governor was one of a few high-profile opponents to nuclear power, which the public has viewed with skepticism since the 2011 Fukushima disaster. **He was also the biggest roadblock for Tepco's effort to run reactors in his prefecture, two of which have been given the all-clear by regulators.** Although the country has imposed stronger safety regulations since 2011, only five of its 39 operable reactors are online. "Yoneyama was not a leader, but certainly an important figure in a position to influence the fate of reactors," said Jeff Kingston, the director of Asian studies at Temple University's Japan campus. "Not many of those, so he will be missed."

Yoneyama repeatedly said he wouldn't support a restart until a panel of experts appointed by the prefecture investigate the Fukushima disaster and study evacuation plans in case of an emergency at Tepco's Niigata plant. He said in January that the process would take at least three years.

When is the next election?

A vote is likely to be held around the beginning of June, according to an official at the prefecture's election commission. The assembly president will officially inform the commission of Yoneyama's resignation in the coming days, which will then trigger a gubernatorial election within 50 days.

Would the next governor also oppose restarts?

Probably. **The last two governors were against restarting the reactors and 64 percent of voters in the last election opposed the move,** according an exit poll conducted by the Asahi Shimbun.

"It is likely that the next governor will continue an anti-restart policy," wrote Daniel Aldrich, a professor at Northeastern University, in an email. "Anti-nuclear sentiment is still high across the country."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party supports the restarts, while most of the opposition parties don't. Both sides will likely field candidates.

High-ranking officials from the Constitutional Democratic Party, the nation's largest opposition party, which is also against nuclear restarts, and the Democratic Party told the Sankei Shimbun Wednesday that opposition parties should band together behind one candidate.

Tamio Mori, who was backed by the LDP in the 2016 Niigata election, could be a potential contender for Abe. Mori is the former mayor of Nagaoka City, and was seen as the more pro-nuclear candidate in the 2016 election when he captured 46 percent of the vote. He didn't respond to an emailed request for comment.

What about the review panel?

This timeline for its work might speed up if the new governor is pro-restart, according to Miho Kurosaki, an analyst at Bloomberg New Energy Finance.

"I don't think the panel review will be removed fully," said Kurosaki, highlighting **lingering safety concerns in the community over a 2007 earthquake that temporarily shut the facility.**

Does Tepco even need local approval?

While the local governor's approval is traditionally sought by utilities before they resume operations at a reactor, it's not required by law. Kyushu Electric Power Co. continued operating reactors at its Sendai facility despite opposition from a newly elected anti-nuclear governor in 2016.

"The 'gentlemen's agreement' that has provided some unwritten capacity to nuclear host community decision makers is in fact quite weak," Aldrich said. "Even if another anti-nuclear governor is elected within Niigata, I believe that the economic and political pressure on utilities will push them to restart reactors."

Han Genpatsu Shimbun



June 1, 2018

Anti-nuclear plant newspaper' reflects on efforts to warn society on its 40th anniversary

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180601/p2a/00m/0na/012000c>

Baku Nishio, editor-in-chief of the Han Genpatsu Newspaper, shows off some back issues of the paper in Tokyo's Shinjuku Ward on May 2, 2018 (Mainichi)

TOKYO -- The editor of the "Han Genpatsu Shimbun" ("Anti-Nuclear Power Plant Newspaper"), which marked its 40th anniversary in May, recalls that the paper promoted exchanges between those involved in the anti-nuclear power movement in a bid to warn society.

- **【Related】** Air duct corrosion, holes found at 7 nuclear plants in Japan
- **【Related】** Radiation monitors in Fukushima broken, malfunction 4,000 times
- **【Related】** Singer Jackson Browne highlights nuclear dangers ahead of Japan concert

- **【Related】** Election Battlegrounds: Area merger overshadows nuclear power debate in Aomori

"The paper has provided a venue for those opposed to atomic power to exchange information and acquire knowledge," said Baku Nishio, now 71, the editor-in-chief of the four-page monthly paper.

The newspaper was inaugurated in May 1978, four years after the national government established a system to provide subsidies to local bodies that host atomic power stations.

"The central government began to play a leading role in the promotion of nuclear power. Residents of various regions who were involved in separate anti-nuclear power campaigns called for solidarity with each other," Nishio said of the motives behind the launch of the paper.

Nishio had previously worked for an advertisement production company. However, he said, "I saw and heard advertising giants provide information on the human networks of those involved in anti-nuclear power campaigns to power companies, and I had serious doubts about the situation."

During a rally, he got acquainted with Jinzaburo Takagi, a now deceased scientist who supported the anti-nuclear power movement, and then became involved in the editorial work of the paper.

Nishio asked residents of various areas, who were calling for the abolition of nuclear plants through rallies and lawsuits as well as mayoral and gubernatorial elections, to contribute articles about the processes of their activities and their feelings to the paper.

Articles in which Takagi, Nishio and others raised questions about atomic power based on objective data were also published in the paper every month. Many graphic charts were used to show analyses of the nuclear power situations in various parts of the world.

Yasue Ashihara, 65, who has been involved in a campaign against Shimane Nuclear Power Plant, said she has constantly used the newspaper as a reference material.

"We've learned how residents in areas where active faults are situated near nuclear plants, just like in Shimane, were appealing to local bodies and power companies while gaining other information from the paper," Ashihara said.

The circulation of the paper had been hovering around 2,000 copies but doubled following the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Following an earthquake off southwestern Hokkaido in 1993 and the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995, the paper published articles in which geologists warned that a massive tsunami could hit a nuclear power station in Japan.

An issue published shortly before the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake states that the Fukushima (No. 1) nuclear plant, which had been in operation for nearly 40 years, has unprecedented levels of risk. The paper then announced that an event will be held to consider the future of the power station with an eye to decommissioning the plant.

Nishio and others involved in the paper are filled with a sense of regret over their failure to prevent the triple meltdown at the power plant that left large areas around the facility contaminated by radiation.

Still, Nishio said, "We've helped stop plans to build new nuclear plants over the past four decades. In that sense, I think we've fulfilled a certain role."

The annual subscription fee is 3,000 yen. The editor has no intention of changing the frequency of publishing the paper or the number of pages.

"We can now gather a massive volume of information on the internet. But the contents are a mixture of fact and fiction. We'd like to carefully choose important information and convey it to our readers without worrying too much about the speed of providing information or the amount," Nishio said.

(Japanese original by Shin Yasutaka, City News Department)

Restarting Tokai 2 "a huge mistake"

July 5, 2018

EDITORIAL: Restarting Tokai No. 2 nuclear plant would be a huge mistake

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201807050026.html>

The Nuclear Regulation Authority has concluded that the Tokai No. 2 nuclear power plant in Ibaraki Prefecture, operated by Japan Atomic Power Co., meets improved safety standards for a restart.

The watchdog body's decision effectively paves the way for bringing the idled facility back online.

But a slew of questions and concerns cast serious doubt on the wisdom of restarting this aging nuclear plant located at the northern tip of the Tokyo metropolitan area, given that it is approaching the end of its 40-year operational lifespan.

There is a compelling case against bringing the plant back on stream unless these concerns are properly addressed.

The first major question is how the project can be squared with the rules for reducing the risk of accidents at aging nuclear facilities.

The 40-year lifespan for nuclear reactors is an important rule to reduce the risk of accidents involving aging reactors that was introduced in the aftermath of the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in 2011.

Although a reactor's operational life can be extended by up to 20 years if approved by the NRA, the government, at the time of the revision to the law, said it would be granted only in exceptional cases.

Despite this caveat, Kansai Electric Power Co.'s applications for extensions for its three aging reactors all got the green light.

The NRA has yet to approve the requested extension of the Tokai No. 2 plant's operational life. But it is obvious that the nuclear watchdog's approval will cause further erosion of the rule. It will also undermine the regulatory regime to limit the lifespan of nuclear facilities per se.

Local communities have also raised objections to restarting the Tokai No. 2 plant. Some 960,000 people live within 30 kilometers of the plant, more than in any other 30-km emergency planning zone.

The local governments within the zone are struggling to develop legally required emergency evacuation plans to prepare for major accidents.

This spring, an agreement was reached between Japan Atomic Power and five municipalities around the plant, including Mito, that commits the operator to seek approval from local authorities within the 30-km zone before restarting the plant.

Winning support from the local communities for the plant reactivation plan is undoubtedly a colossal challenge, given strong anxiety about the facility's safety among local residents. The gloomy situation was brought home by the Mito municipal assembly's adoption of a written opinion opposing the plan.

But Japan Atomic Power is determined to carry through the plan as its survival depends on the plant continuing operation.

The company was set up simply to produce and sell electricity by using atomic energy. Its nuclear reactors are all currently offline, which has placed the entity in serious financial difficulty.

Since the company is unable to raise on its own funds to implement the necessary safety measures at the Tokai No. 2 plant, which are estimated to exceed 170 billion yen (\$1.54 billion), Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) and Tohoku Electric Power Co., which are both shareholders and customers of the company, will provide financial support.

But TEPCO has been put under effective state control to deal with the costly consequences of the Fukushima disaster.

It is highly doubtful that the utility, which is kept alive with massive tax-financed support, is qualified to take over the financial risk of the business of another company in trouble.

TEPCO claims the Tokai No. 2 plant is promising as a source of low-cost and stable power supply, although it has not offered convincing grounds for the claim.

Some members of the NRA have voiced skepticism about this view.

TEPCO and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which supervises the power industry, have a responsibility to offer specific and detailed explanations about related issues to win broad public support for the plan to reactivate the Tokai No. 2 nuclear plant.

A hard look at the grim situation surrounding the plant leaves little doubt that restarting it does not make sense.

Japan Atomic Power and the major electric utilities that own it should undertake a fundamental review of the management of the nuclear power company without delaying efforts to tackle the problems besetting the operator of the Tokai No. 2 plant.

First anniversary of the nuke ban treaty



Activists call on the government to ratify the nuclear ban treaty in Sendai on July 7, a year after the United Nations adopted the treaty. (The Asahi Shimbun)

July 9, 2018

EDITORIAL: Let our voices be heard to prod Japan to act on nuke ban treaty

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201807090037.html>

July 7 marked the first anniversary of the adoption of the first-ever legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, reached a year ago at the United Nations, bans the development, possession and use of nuclear arms.

With the world's nuclear powers, led by the United States and Russia, making little progress toward slashing their nuclear arsenals, about two-thirds of the U.N. member countries voted for the treaty.

The challenge facing the world is how to capitalize on the landmark pact to bring itself closer to a future free from nuclear weapons.

Japan, as the only country that has suffered from the ravages of a nuclear attack, should lead global debate on this challenge. But the Japanese government has never stepped up to the plate, deterred by the fact that Japan is protected by the "nuclear umbrella" provided by the United States.

While promising to serve as a "bridge" between nuclear powers and nonnuclear countries, Tokyo has been keeping a distance from the nuclear ban treaty.

We must not forget that survivors of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or hibakusha, had provided a great incentive for the adoption of the treaty by recounting their stories about the inhumane nature of nuclear arms.

The relatively small countries that served as the driving forces behind the agreement, including Austria, received vital support from nongovernmental organizations across the world. Various messages calling for the abolition of nuclear arms should also be sent out from Japan.

One notable trend that has emerged in Japan over the past year is a wave of support for the treaty among local assemblies.

More than 320 local assemblies, or about 20 percent of all local governments, have adopted proposals calling on the central government to join the nuclear ban treaty.

In June, the Joetsu municipal assembly in Niigata Prefecture unanimously adopted a written opinion urging the government to sign the treaty.

The assembly heard a hibakusha, an 89-year-old woman, tell her story about surviving the devastation of Hiroshima at the age of 16. She is the leader of one of the citizen groups that petitioned the assembly to take the step.

One assembly member described her story as "powerfully moving," while another said it had a "great impact" on the assembly.

One conservative member of the assembly said, "We have to urge the government to give serious attention to the feelings and anger of hibakusha and ensure that Japan, as the atomic-bombed nation, will make all-out efforts for the abolition of nuclear weapons."

"We want the government to shed its reluctance and take action instead of simply sitting on the fence.

The town assembly of Shiriuchi, Hokkaido, unanimously adopted a similar opinion in December last year and again in June this year.

The assembly twice took the action because the government has been slow to act.

Although Shiriuchi is a small town of slightly more than 4,000 residents, "We cannot just sit quietly without doing anything," said a female member of the assembly, who led the move to adopt the petition.

Many other local assemblies have unanimously adopted similar opinions. This fact indicates that the wish to see a world without nuclear weapons is widely shared across political boundaries.

Many citizen groups across the nation have also been engaged in various activities to promote public support for the treaty, such as signature campaigns to call on countries to join the treaty.

One group organized an event in which participants are encouraged to write their wishes for a nuclear-free world on “tanzaku,” or strips of paper on which people write wishes in the traditional “Tanabata” (Star Festival Day) in Japan, which is celebrated on July 7.

For the treaty to take effect, 50 countries need to ratify it. So far only 11 have done so.

It has been reported that nuclear powers are putting “pressure” on countries not to ratify the treaty.

Each of us needs to make tenacious efforts to get the government of the atomic-bombed country out of its inaction to push forward the movement to put the treaty into effect.

TEPCO shareholders oppose restart of Tokai plant: Money can be put to better use

July 13, 2018

Shareholders seek injunction on TEPCO funds for Tokai plant

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201807130019.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

Three shareholders of Tokyo Electric Power Co. Holdings Inc. (TEPCO) filed a temporary injunction request on July 12 with the Tokyo District Court to stop the utility from providing financial support for the resumption of the Tokai No. 2 nuclear plant.

The plaintiffs argued that the interests of TEPCO and its shareholders would be violated if support was provided to Japan Atomic Power Co. with little likelihood of collecting a return from that venture.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority on July 4 gave the green light regarding safety measures submitted by Japan Atomic Power for the restart of its plant in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, northeast of Tokyo.

However, since the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, Japan Atomic Power has not operated any of its nuclear plants, and it had sought financial support in the form of loan guarantees from TEPCO and Tohoku Electric Power Co.

That support is essential to procuring the 174 billion yen (\$1.5 billion) for Japan Atomic Power to implement needed safety measures for the Tokai No. 2 plant.

The TEPCO shareholders in their request pointed out that the Tokai No. 2 plant would reach the end of its 40-year life span in November. They said that even if the operational life was extended for 20 years, it would be difficult for TEPCO to recover the funds it would, in effect, put up because years would be required to complete the safety measures before any operation could be resumed.

They claim that any financial support would go against provisions in the Companies Law that call for careful management decisions that do not clash with the interests of shareholders.

A TEPCO official declined to comment as no one had yet seen the court request.

While TEPCO itself has had to depend on financial support from the government to deal with the aftermath of the 2011 triple meltdown at its Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, company President Tomoaki Kobayakawa explained that the electricity it would receive from the Tokai No. 2 plant would allow for stable and inexpensive electricity to be provided to its customers.

But **not only will a huge amount have to be spent for safety measures at the Tokai No. 2 plant, but Japan Atomic Power will also have to obtain the approval of municipal governments in the vicinity of the plant.**

Even with such hurdles, TEPCO, in effect, was forced to provide financial support to Japan Atomic Power because if it went bankrupt, the financial conditions of TEPCO and the electric power companies that are the major shareholders would be hurt.

Opposition lawmakers have blasted TEPCO for even considering providing financial support and called on TEPCO to use that money to provide compensation for damages from the Fukushima nuclear accident, to decommission the reactors at the crippled plant and to lower electric rates to its customers.

(This article was compiled from reports by Takuya Kitazawa and Rintaro Sakurai.)

"We have our doubts"

July 18, 2018

EDITORIAL: Oi nuclear plant ruling reads like it was rendered pre-Fukushima

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201807180016.html>

The Nagoya High Court's Kanazawa branch declared that the nation, having learned its lesson from the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in 2011, will not make the same mistakes again.

We have our doubts.

The July 4 ruling overturned the Fukui District Court's decision of four years ago in favor of the plaintiffs, who sought an injunction against Kansai Electric Power Co. to suspend operations of the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

The plaintiffs have decided against taking their case to the Supreme Court, which will finalize the high court ruling.

The Fukui District Court's decision to halt operations of the Oi reactors was based on its own study of whether the reactors posed "risks of causing grave situations similar to the Fukushima accident."

Its main focus was not to judge whether the reactors met the new safety regulations established by the Nuclear Regulation Authority, which was set up after the Fukushima disaster.

In contrast, the high court said it would be "only proper for a court to respect (the NRA regulations)" as they were "established based on the latest scientific and technological expertise of specialists from many fields."

The court said there was nothing unreasonable in the NRA judgment that the Oi reactors met the new safety regulations. It concluded that the risks posed by the reactors were being controlled to a negligible level by socially accepted standards.

But what lessons has the Fukushima disaster taught us? Don't they boil down to the fact that we believed in many experts who assured us of the safety of nuclear reactors, only to realize that an "unexpected" disaster could and did occur, causing tremendous damage we have yet to recover from.

The high court ruling read like something from pre-Fukushima days. We could not help feeling the same way every time we come across the view that the nation has more or less learned all the lessons it needed to learn from Fukushima.

One of the hardest lessons we learned--which the high court did not really address--is the sheer difficulty of evacuating citizens safely after a serious accident.

After the Fukushima disaster, local governments within 30 kilometers of nuclear power plants came to be required to establish evacuation plans for residents.

A reactor restart should be decided only after third-party experts determine whether the evacuation plan is appropriate and realistic enough.

This is not how things are being done, however.

The NRA specializes solely in examining the safety of plant facilities and equipment from a technological aspect. The administration merely reiterates that reactors that have passed the NRA's safety tests should be allowed to restart.

There is a huge procedural flaw here, in that all such reactors are back online once the host local governments give the green light.

The high court did say that ending nuclear power generation is an available option. But it went on to state, "The final decision is not for the judiciary to make. It should be based on a political judgment to be left to the legislature or the administration."

How have the Diet and the government received the high court ruling?

If they have truly learned lessons from Fukushima, their obvious responsibility should be to clearly present a policy to close nuclear plants and critically examine each case for a reactor restart, taking the evacuation plan set by the local government into account.

--The Asahi Shimbun, July 18

Grassroot effort needed to change one-sided approach

August 6, 2018

ICAN champions grass-roots efforts to persuade Japan and others to support a nuclear-free world

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/08/06/national/ican-champions-grass-roots-efforts-persuade-japan-others-support-nuclear-free-world/#.W2g8bslyWos>

by Patrick Parr

Contributing Writer

ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, has made significant progress in the last year, but according to core member Akira Kawasaki the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize winning coalition is just getting started.

ICAN, based in Geneva and launched in 2007, now has around 450 partner organizations in nearly a hundred countries. The process of building itself into a force for peace has had its challenges, but on July 7 last year, this "grass-roots civil society coalition" took one big step toward its mission of "worldwide nuclear disarmament," Kawasaki said in an interview. On that day in New York, after years of persuading other countries to support the endeavor, ICAN worked with the United Nations and passed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, initially supported by over 135 countries.

In order for the treaty to become international law, however, it must be signed and ratified by at least 50 nation-states. So far, 60 nations have signed the treaty but only 14 have officially integrated the treaty into their constitution. None of the world nuclear powers have joined and neither has Japan, which relies on the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

Millions will recognize the 73rd anniversary on Monday of that horrific morning in Hiroshima. Public support for the treaty is strong in Japan, with over half of the municipalities pledging their support. The Japanese government, however, has decided to take a passive stance on the matter, stating that "since no nuclear weapon states are involved, the treaty is not practical ... (instead) Japan will bridge the divide." Kawasaki disagrees. "The uniqueness of the treaty was that it prohibited nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds." Since Japan is the only country in the world to have experienced the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons on its own soil, "Japan should take the lead in advancing this humanitarian

discourse,” he said. By not signing the treaty, Kawasaki believes the government is “undermining the credibility of Japan as a nation.”

According to Kawasaki, it is only a matter of time until ICAN’s treaty achieves the 50-nation requirement. Ninety days after that final nation-state signature, the treaty will officially replace the Cold War-negotiated 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The irony of the name is not lost on Kawasaki, since the half-century-old agreement actually “perpetuated” the proliferation of nuclear weapons and caused nations such as India, Pakistan and North Korea to go rogue — or, in Kawasaki’s words, “mirror” the behavior of the United States and Russia — and set up their own nuclear weapons programs.

Once ICAN’s treaty becomes international law, the pressure will then shift to countries such as the U.S. and Russia. “In the past,” Kawasaki says, “nuclear weapons were a symbol of power. But now, with a treaty that rejects compromise, nuclear weapons will be a symbol of shame.” Economic sanctions can be enforced, and banks could begin a divestment process similar to what occurred after the Convention on Cluster Munitions Treaty was put into effect in 2008. Kawasaki also mentions the “Don’t Bank on the Bomb” campaign, and says that since the signing of the treaty, “as many as 30 banks ceased to invest in nuclear weapons producers.”

As of Sunday, ICAN had secured the ratification of their treaty from Mexico and Austria — the 15th- and 28th-ranked GDP economies in the world, respectively — and Brazil, which is ranked ninth, has also signed to indicate its support. In order for the treaty to gain any traction as far as future sanctions are concerned, ICAN is going to need the help of countries such as Japan, the third-largest economy, if they are to continue to have success.

In order for the Japanese government to change its stance, Kawasaki believes several factors will need to be addressed — the first being the continued nuclear disarmament of North Korea. “If both North and South Korea join the treaty, the North will feel obliged to disarm, and the South will be bound by law not to deploy, keep or assist U.S.-related nuclear weapons.” While Kawasaki welcomes the recent peace talks between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore, he said “international law will bind the country to their commitment.”

Kawasaki urges anyone who lives in a country that has not signed the treaty to spread the word and become involved in their local city councils. In Japan, especially, it will take a grass-roots effort to change what some see as a one-sided government approach. “A vast majority of Japanese people believe they are victims,” Kawasaki says, “and we are calling for a nuclear-free world. But when you look at the behavior of the government ... it shows that they are considering the issue only superficially.”

Evacuation agreements between municipalities

October 31, 2018

Eastern Japan cities sign nuclear accident evacuation accord

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20181031/p2g/00m/0dm/061000c>

CHIBA, Japan (Kyodo) -- A local government near a nuclear power plant in eastern Japan signed an accord Wednesday that will allow its residents to take shelter in six municipalities further away from the complex in the case of an accident at the plant.

- 【Related】 Evacuation drill held near nuclear plant in capital of Shimane Pref.
- 【Related】 Tokai No. 2 nuke plant passes tighter safety checks introduced after 2011 quake
- 【Related】 UN rights expert urges Japan to halt returns to Fukushima
- 【Related】 Large-scale evacuation drill held around Takahama nuclear plant

The arrangement aims to enable the evacuation of about 43,000 of around 270,000 residents from Mito, Ibaraki Prefecture, which is located within 30 kilometers from the Tokai No. 2 plant, to Kashiwa and five other cities in Chiba Prefecture.

Under the accord, the six cities in Chiba are to set up shelters to be managed by the Mito municipal government. The maximum evacuation period will be one month in principle and Ibaraki Prefecture and Mito will be in charge of securing necessary supplies.

Screenings for radioactive materials and decontamination work will be carried out by the Ibaraki prefectural government.

The nuclear plant located northeast of Tokyo is operated by Japan Atomic Power Co. In September, it cleared a safety screening to resume operations under stricter rules introduced after the March 2011 nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

The conclusion of the evacuation accord met with opposition from civic groups in the six cities which claimed the cooperative partnership could be viewed as a step toward the aging plant's resumption.

The city of Mito has concluded similar accords with municipalities in Ibaraki, Tochigi and Gunma prefectures to evacuate around 180,000 people. It is arranging an agreement to flee the remaining 40,000 residents to Saitama Prefecture.

Eight other municipalities within a 30-km radius of the Tokai No. 2 plant in the village of Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture, have also signed evacuation accords with local authorities in nearby prefectures.

Ikata reactor restarted

Shikoku Electric restarts Ikata nuclear reactor

October 27, 2018 (Mainichi Japan)

https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20181027/p2g/00m/0dm/050000c#cxrecs_s

MATSUYAMA, Japan (Kyodo) -- Shikoku Electric Power Co. on Saturday restarted a reactor at the Ikata nuclear power plant in western Japan after a suspension of nearly one year due to a high court order.

- 【Related】 Japan court rejects local call to prevent restart of Ikata reactor

- **【Related】** Experts divided on court OK for restart of Ikata nuke reactor
- **【Related】** Hiroshima High Court overturns injunction against Ikata reactor restart

The restart of the No. 3 unit at the plant in the town of Ikata in Ehime Prefecture, announced by the power company after midnight, came after a Japanese high court accepted an appeal by the utility in late September ruling that there are no safety risks associated with potential volcanic activity in the nearby region.

Shikoku Electric said if all goes smoothly the No.3 unit will reach criticality, a controlled self-sustaining nuclear fission chain reaction, in the evening.

The company said it will start producing and transmitting electricity on Tuesday, before possibly putting the reactor into commercial operation on Nov. 28.

The decision by the Hiroshima High Court was an about-face from its provisional injunction issued in December last year that demanded the power company halt the No. 3 unit, capable of generating 890,000 kilowatts of electricity, until Sept. 30 following a request from a local opposition group.

The group had argued that Shikoku Electric underestimated the risk of pyroclastic flows reaching the plant if a big eruption occurred at the caldera of Mt. Aso, which is about 130 kilometers away.

The temporary suspension order was the first in which a Japanese high court banned operations at a nuclear plant since the 2011 meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi complex.

But the high court said Sept. 25 that the group's claim of a possible destructive volcanic eruption during the plant's operating period has no satisfactory grounds and there is a small chance of volcanic ash and rocks reaching the facility.

The reactor had been idle for maintenance since October last year. Before that, it had gone back online in August 2016 after clearing stricter safety regulations implemented in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Shikoku Electric had already decided to decommission the aging No. 1 and 2 reactors at the plant.

The No. 3 unit becomes the eighth reactor to be in operation in Japan at a time when a large majority of reactors in the country remain offline following the 2011 nuclear disaster.

At the time of the meltdowns, Japan had 54 nuclear reactors for commercial use.

20-year life extension for Tokai 2 approved by NRA

November 7, 2018

Aging Tokai nuclear plant outside Tokyo cleared to restart

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201811070061.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

The nation's nuclear watchdog on Nov. 7 formally approved a 20-year extension of the only nuclear reactor in the Tokyo metropolitan area, although local communities will have the final say on the restart.

Operator Japan Atomic Power Co. will need the consent of the Ibaraki prefectural government, as well as six local municipalities, including the village of Tokai, where its aging Tokai No. 2 nuclear plant is located.

The company faced having to prepare to decommission the plant's 40-year-old reactor if it failed to meet a Nov. 27 deadline on revised and more stringent safety standards implemented by the Nuclear Regulation Authority in the aftermath of the 2011 nuclear disaster in Fukushima Prefecture.

After the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, the operational life of nuclear reactors was set at up to 40 years in principle. But power companies can continue to operate their facilities for an additional 20 years if their reactors pass the NRA screening.

So far, all requests to the NRA to extend the operating life of old reactors have been approved.

The reactor at the Tokai No. 2 plant is the fourth to clear the NRA for extended operations since the Fukushima disaster. It is located about 120 kilometers from the heart of Tokyo.

The 1.1-gigawatt boiling water reactor is the only unit at the Tokai No. 2 plant and is of the same design as the crippled reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

The Tokai No. 2 plant was also affected by the tsunami generated by the magnitude-9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011.

It is the first time for a reactor affected by the tsunami to be approved for an operational extension. It is also the first boiling water reactor to gain such approval.

The NRA examined the reactor's pressure vessel and other equipment, and concluded that the unit could operate safely until November 2038.

But it remains unclear if Japan Atomic Power can restart the plant under its earliest time frame of 2021, due to local opposition.

In October, Mayor Toru Umino of Naka, one of the six municipalities around the plant, announced his opposition to the extension. The city assembly of Mito, another municipality, adopted a resolution against the extension in June.

About 960,000 people live within a 30-km radius of the plant, making it the most densely populated site among the nation's nuclear facilities.

After the Fukushima disaster, municipalities in close proximity to a nuclear plant were required to craft an evacuation plan to respond to a nuclear emergency.

But only three of the 14 municipalities around the Tokai No. 2 nuclear plant within that range have done so due to the difficulty of arranging transportation for such a large number of people.

Bringing the reactor back online is expected to cost Japan Atomic Power at least 174 billion yen (\$1.54 billion), a sum that includes construction of a seawall and other safeguard measures.

The company hopes to have those measures in place by the end of March 2021.

It may well also have to spend tens of billions of yen in the future to meet a new requirement that nuclear facilities are able to contain damage from a terrorist attack.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

May 20, 2014

Operator Japan Atomic Power Co. applies for an NRA safety screening under new reactor regulations

Nov. 24, 2017

Application for a screening of an extension of operations

Sept. 26, 2018

NRA certifies that the reactor's safeguard measures meet the new regulations

Oct. 18

NRA approves plans to enhance the safety of the reactor

Nov. 7

NRA approves an operational extension

March 2021

Seawall and other safety measures to be completed

Plant to restart if Ibaraki prefectural government and six nearby municipalities give their consent

NRA approves extension of tsunami-hit Tokai No. 2 plant, but restart awaits local agreement

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20181107/p2a/00m/0na/010000c>

TOKYO -- The Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA) has approved the extension of operations at Japan Atomic Power Co.'s Tokai No. 2 Power Station in the eastern Japan prefecture of Ibaraki by up to 20 years, but the restart of the aging facility still awaits local approval.

- **【Related】** Eastern Japan cities sign nuclear accident evacuation accord
- **【Related】** Evacuation drill held near nuclear plant in capital of Shimane Pref.
- **【Related】** Tokai No. 2 nuke plant passes tighter safety checks introduced after 2011 quake

The government's nuclear regulator made the decision on Nov. 7 after the nuclear plant passed three inspections, including one to see if the complex meets the new regulatory standards introduced in the wake of the March 2011 outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

The move could allow Japan Atomic Power to continue operating the atomic power station in the village of Tokai until Nov. 27, 2038.

Attention is now focused on whether the decision will win approval from the Ibaraki Prefectural Government and six municipalities around the station with which the company has signed safety agreements.

Nuclear reactors can be operated for up to 40 years in principle. However, the period of operations at such plants can be extended just once by up to 20 years. The Tokai No. 2 plant's sole unit is the fourth nuclear reactor for which an extension has been approved following the No. 1 and 2 reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Takahama plant and the No. 3 reactor at the firm's Mihama plant, both in the central Japan prefecture of Fukui.

The Tokai No. 2 station will be the first nuclear plant for which an extension has been approved among those that sustained damage in the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. Furthermore, the plant's reactor is the sole boiling-water unit -- the same type as those at the tsunami-ravaged Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station -- for which an extension of operations has been green-lighted.

Japan Atomic Power applied to the NRA for safety inspections for the Tokai No. 2 power station in May 2014 with an eye to reactivating it and for permission to extend the operations at the plant in November 2017.

The facility would have been decommissioned if it had not passed the three inspections by Nov. 27 this year. Therefore, the NRA barely made the deadline.

The plant's large boiling-water reactor with an output of 1.1 million kilowatts stopped following the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. The power station temporarily lost its external power source. Moreover, it was hit by up to 5.4-meter-high tsunami waves triggered by the temblor, making one of the three emergency power generators unusable. However, the plant used the remaining two generators to continue cooling the reactor core.

Out of reflection on the trouble, Japan Atomic Power has decided to take additional safety measures, including the installation of a reinforced concrete storm surge barrier on the assumption that the plant could be hit by tsunami waves up to 17.9 meters high.

The NRA deemed these safety measures are appropriate in light of the new regulatory standards.

In inspections of the power station to see if its reactor pressure vessel has deteriorated, the atomic power regulator concluded that it can endure the extension of operations beyond the 40-year limit.

Japan Atomic Power intends to secure 174 billion yen to implement these safety measures after receiving financial assistance from Tokyo Electric Power Co. and Tohoku Electric Power Co. and complete the work by March 2021.

The operator of the Tokai No. 2 station has signed safety agreements with five municipalities around the plant besides the municipal government of Tokai that hosts the power station and the prefectural government, effectively allowing these surrounding municipalities to approve or disapprove reactivation of the plant. Japan Atomic Power's agreements with five surrounding municipalities are the first of its kind allowing municipalities other than those hosting atomic power stations to approve or disapprove operations at such plants.

Among the five municipalities, Toru Umino, mayor of the Ibaraki Prefecture city of Naka, has already clarified the city's opposition to reactivation of the power plant.

Japan Atomic Power's Tokai Power Station, situated on the premises that host the Tokai No. 2 plant, is in the process of being decommissioned.

(Japanese original by Riki Iwama, Science & Environment News Department)

See also

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/11/07/national/japans-nuclear-watchdog-approves-extension-tsunami-hit-plant-operate-beyond-40-year-cap/>

Tokai 2 should be scrapped

November 8, 2018

EDITORIAL: Aging Tokai No. 2 reactor should be scrapped, not restarted

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201811080024.html>

The nation's nuclear watchdog on Nov. 7 formally approved a 20-year operating extension of the Tokai No. 2 nuclear power plant in Ibaraki Prefecture, which is approaching the end of its 40-year legal life span.

The decision by the Nuclear Regulation Authority effectively marks the end of government-mandated technical screening to allow Japan Atomic Power Co. to bring the offline plant back on stream.

But all sorts of questions and concerns remain.

There is not a good rationale for extending the life of the aging and currently idled single-reactor nuclear plant, which is located in the densely populated Tokyo metropolitan area.

Given the difficulties of evacuating the large population in surrounding areas if a serious accident occurs at the plant, the reactor should not be permitted to resume operations.

The rule that nuclear reactors should not in principle be allowed to operate for more than 40 years is designed to ensure that facilities based on outdated designs will be duly retired. This is a key component of the new stricter safety regulations introduced in the aftermath of the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in 2011.

The life of a reactor can be extended by up to 20 years if approved by the NRA. When the new regulations were introduced, the government said that such permission would be granted only in “a very limited number of highly exceptional cases.”

The problem is that there are no clear criteria for allowing such exceptions. In fact, the Tokai No. 2 has become the fourth reactor to receive the nuclear watchdog’s green light to operate beyond the 40-year period.

If such exceptional cases keep cropping up and become the norm, the 40-year rule could end up being a dead letter.

It is clearly necessary to review the regulations on aging reactors from the viewpoint of steadily reducing the nation’s dependence on nuclear power generation.

About 960,000 people live within a 30-kilometer radius of the Tokai No. 2 plant, making it the most densely populated site among the nation's nuclear facilities.

Local governments in the zone are required by law to develop emergency evacuation plans.

The municipalities that are subject to the requirement have been struggling to draft feasible evacuation plans in the face of many formidable challenges, including the difficulty of securing the means to transport elderly and disabled residents.

The outlook for local government support for the plan is also dismal. The plant operator needs to obtain the consent of the local governments of Ibaraki Prefecture and Tokai, a village where the plant is located, to restart the reactor. Besides, five cities around the facility also have the effective right to decide whether to go along with the plan.

The municipal assembly of Mito, one of the five cities, and the mayor of another, Naka, have already expressed their opposition to the plan.

Another big hurdle for bringing the reactor back online is the **huge cost of taking required safety measures**, which has been estimated at more than 174 billion yen (\$1.54 billion).

It is clearly impossible for Japan Atomic Power, which is on fragile financial footing, to raise the funds on its own, and the company is hoping for a financial injection from Tokyo Electric Power Co. and Tohoku Electric Power Co., two major electric utilities that have a major stake in the plant operator and buy electricity from the company.

But TEPCO, the operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 plant, has been put under effective state control as part of a program to bail out the utility facing a massive bill for compensation and cleanup work. It is now kept alive with huge amounts of taxpayer money.

It is highly doubtful whether TEPCO is qualified to rescue another troubled company.

If Japan Atomic Power starts work to restart the plant without obtaining the consent of local governments, it could end up wasting an enormous amount of money when the issue is raised later.

It should first **focus on talks with the local communities involved**. TEPCO, for its part, should rigorously assess the risks and the economic viability of supporting Japan Atomic Power's plan and provide satisfactory explanations about its decisions.

The local governments involved have a grave responsibility to ensure the safety of local residents. The Tokai No. 2 plant was also damaged by the tsunami generated by the magnitude-9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake that crippled the Fukushima plant in 2011, and had problems putting the reactor in a state of cold shutdown.

The prefectural and municipal governments are facing some weighty safety questions, including whether deep-seated anxiety about the plant among local residents can possibly be assuaged and whether they can develop effective emergency evacuation plans and systems.

These local entities need to ponder such questions as **their priority must be to ensure that local residents remain safe**.

Interview with Koizumi

January 17, 2019

Koizumi says Japan must say 'no' to nuclear energy

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201901170010.html>

THE ASAHI SHIMBUN

When he was prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi championed the use of atomic power to generate electricity.

Then the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster struck, triggering a crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant in Fukushima Prefecture.

Koizumi, in office from 2001 to 2006, and widely regarded as one of Japan's most popular postwar leaders, started reading up on the nuclear issue, and had a change of heart.

Koizumi, 76, published his first book by his own hand titled "Genpatsu Zero Yareba Dekiru" (We can abolish all nuclear plants if we try) in December. It is available from Ohta Publishing Co.

In it, he lambasts consumers for lacking a sense of crisis and simply believing a serious accident like the Fukushima disaster will never happen again in Japan during their lifetime.

In a recent interview with The Asahi Shimbun, Koizumi said it was “a lie” to claim that nuclear power is “safe, low-cost and clean,” although that is precisely what he espoused when he held the reins of power.

* * *

Excerpts from the interview follow.

Question: An opinion poll by The Asahi Shimbun in February 2018 showed that 61 percent of people oppose the restart of idle nuclear reactors, and yet, reactors are successively being brought back online. What is your view about this?

Koizumi: Many people still support the zero nuclear power generation policy. When I teamed up with Morihiro Hosokawa, (a former prime minister), who ran for the Tokyo governor's election (in 2014), to call for abolition of nuclear power facilities, voters on the streets showed a positive reaction.

But now many people do not realize how dangerous nuclear reactors are. They probably believe a nuclear accident will never occur again while they live because of all the attention that has been paid to safety since the Fukushima crisis.

However, in the 2012 report compiled by the government's panel to investigate causes of the disaster, the panel's chair said, “Things that are possible happen. Things that are thought not possible also happen.”

In other words, there are no totally safe technologies.

Q: Many people seemingly believe that they have no choice but to accept nuclear power because it costs less than other types of electricity generation and electricity rates are cheaper. Do you agree?

A: The argument is doubtful. Nuclear power is relatively cheap just because the government covers part of the costs. Nuclear plants cannot be operated without assistance from the government. Private financial institutions would not extend loans to operators of nuclear facilities if the state did not provide guarantees.

Were it not for governmental support and taxpayers' money, nuclear power would be more expensive than other kinds of energy.

Renewable energy (such as solar and wind power) currently accounts for 15 percent of total power production in Japan. The percentage is much higher than before the Fukushima crisis. Even if costs slightly increase, citizens would accept the zero nuclear policy.

Q: Is it really possible to replace all the nuclear reactors with other sorts of power plants?

A: No reactors were operated for two years after the Fukushima disaster. But no power shortages were reported during the period. That means Japan can do without nuclear plants. It is a fact.

Q: During your tenure as prime minister (between 2001 and 2006), it emerged in 2002 that Tokyo Electric Power Co. had concealed problems at its nuclear facilities. Didn't that cause you to lose your trust in nuclear power even then?

A: No. Power supply is important and the risk of power failures could damage the economy. It was then said to be difficult to replace (nuclear plants that produced) 30 percent of the nation's electricity needs with other power sources.

As there were few facilities to generate power based on renewables at the time, I believed nuclear reactors were essential. I simply trusted the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which said "nuclear energy is safe, low-cost and clean."

But that was a big lie.

Although some people argued "nuclear plants are dangerous" even before the Fukushima crisis, I was deceived by the ministry and did not take their words seriously.

I did some soul-searching and decided I ought to spread the word that Japan can do without nuclear plants.

Q: You said "deceived." Are you working to rectify your past mistake?

A: Yes. I am touring across Japan as I am keen to share my thoughts with many people.

Q: The issue of nuclear plants and their safety has hardly featured in recent national election campaigns. What's your take on this?

A: The construction of a nuclear reactor is estimated at 1 trillion yen (\$9.28 billion) now. Building reactors requires many materials, so many companies are involved in the nuclear power business.

Many tiny, small and midsize companies benefit from nuclear plants. Many of them insist that abolishing nuclear power would throw people out of work.

Some labor unions that support opposition parties are engaged in the nuclear power generation industry, though the (main opposition) Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan says it is in favor of the zero nuclear power policy.

Q: What do you think is important in realizing a nuclear-free society?

A: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe insists nuclear plants are essential, so many lawmakers remain silent about the issue. But there are lawmakers even in the (ruling) Liberal Democratic Party who support the zero nuclear power policy.

If Abe declares the state will abolish all nuclear plants, the situation will drastically change. Both ruling and opposition parties can cooperate over the issue.

Why hasn't the government set dream-inspiring goals to promote solar, wind and geothermal power generation?

Q: Could you explain the words in your book that "it is regrettable and irritating that I was deceived"?

A: When meeting with Abe, I always tell him, "Be careful not to be deceived by the economy ministry." But he just smiles a wry smile and does not argue back.

He should not miss the current political opportunity that he has the upper hand (to change the government's conventional nuclear energy policy).

Q: Do you talk with your son and Lower House lawmaker Shinjiro Koizumi about the issue of nuclear plants?

A: He knows my opinion all too well. He is still young, so he should do what he wants after gaining power. (This article is based on an interview by Asahi Shimbun Staff Writer Takashi Arichika.)

Recycling Fukushima waste a "massive headache" for Govt.



Radiation-contaminated soil is kept temporarily in Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture, before being moved to an intermediate storage facility. (Asahi Shimbun file photo)

February 26, 2019

Fierce opposition to recycling radioactive soil from Fukushima

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201902260058.html>

How to dispose of mountains of soil contaminated by radiation from the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster poses a massive headache for the central government.

Officials had long insisted that contaminated surface soil removed after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant would eventually be stored outside of Fukushima Prefecture.

According to one estimate, the total volume of such soil will reach 14 million cubic meters by fiscal 2021.

Local entities outside of Fukushima are understandably hesitant about serving as host to such vast quantities of possibly hazardous dirt.

Officials in Tokyo are now hoping to sway local governments to act as hosts by proposing reuse of the contaminated soil for public works projects under certain conditions.

One requirement would be that soil radiation levels below 8,000 becquerels per kilogram, the standard used by the government in classifying whether the waste material requires special treatment, could be used for various construction projects.

This poses a dilemma for Fukushima Prefecture, which fears local residents will be stuck with the problem despite repeated pledges by the government to move all contaminated soil from the prefecture.

Work got under way four years ago to move contaminated soil to intermediate storage facilities in Fukushima Prefecture. As of Feb. 19, the volume of soil transported to those facilities totaled 2.35 million cubic meters.

Initially, the government set a target date of March 2045 for moving all of the contaminated soil outside of Fukushima to a permanent storage facility.

However, discussions have yet to begin on where to build the structure.

Koji Yamada, an Environment Ministry official who has been involved in the issue, conceded it will not be easy to find a candidate municipality for the facility.

"We are now at the stage of trying to obtain understanding from a national perspective," he said.

Ministry officials say that reusing contaminated soil to reduce the volume that eventually will have to be moved to the final storage facility could win favor from some municipalities.

A panel of experts set up by the Environment Ministry agreed in June 2016 that moving the entire volume of contaminated soil to a final storage facility is unrealistic.

The panel suggested that reducing the volume of contaminated soil by reusing portions deemed safe under radiation standards now in place seemed to offer the best option in finding a candidate site for the final storage facility.

It also proposed ways in which the soil could be reused; for example, in public works projects where the commissioning authority was clearly a responsible body.

The panel also proposed using the soil for the foundations of roads and embankments. It said sufficient quantities were available to ensure stable maintenance over many years.

When the panel met again last December, the members were briefed on the best-case scenario for the development of technology to reduce radiation levels in the soil. The most optimistic forecast was that as much as 99 percent of the debris could eventually be reused.

Under that scenario, only 30,000 cubic meters, or about 0.2 percent of the total volume, would have to be moved to the final storage facility to be buried there.

While Environment Ministry officials say that reusable treated soil would be considered for locations both within and outside Fukushima Prefecture, the only specific proposals made to date have been limited to three municipalities in Fukushima.

Local residents in two of those municipalities, one of which is Nihonmatsu, have mounted petition drives and other activities to block the reuse of contaminated soil in their areas. They contend that allowing such plans to go ahead would be at odds with government promises to store the soil outside of the prefecture. The fact remains that the bulk of the contaminated soil is stored in Fukushima Prefecture. However, seven other prefectures also have a combined 330,000 cubic meters stored at various locations, such as parks and farmland.

Since August 2018, the Environment Ministry has been trying to determine whether using contaminated soil for land reclamation projects would prove detrimental to the health of local residents.

It has conducted field trials in Nasu, Tochigi Prefecture, and on the grounds of a facility operated by the Japan Atomic Energy Agency in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture.

But Nasu resident Masato Tashiro, who has been following the issue, was highly critical of the six-month period authorized to confirm the safety of such soil.

"That is way too short to make such a judgment, considering the fact the soil will be buried for such a long time," Tashiro said. "Residents fear their health may be impaired over the long-term."

(This article was written by Teru Okumura and Shintaro Egawa.)

I have the RIGHT to speak out!



March 10, 2019

Fukushima child evacuee speaks out

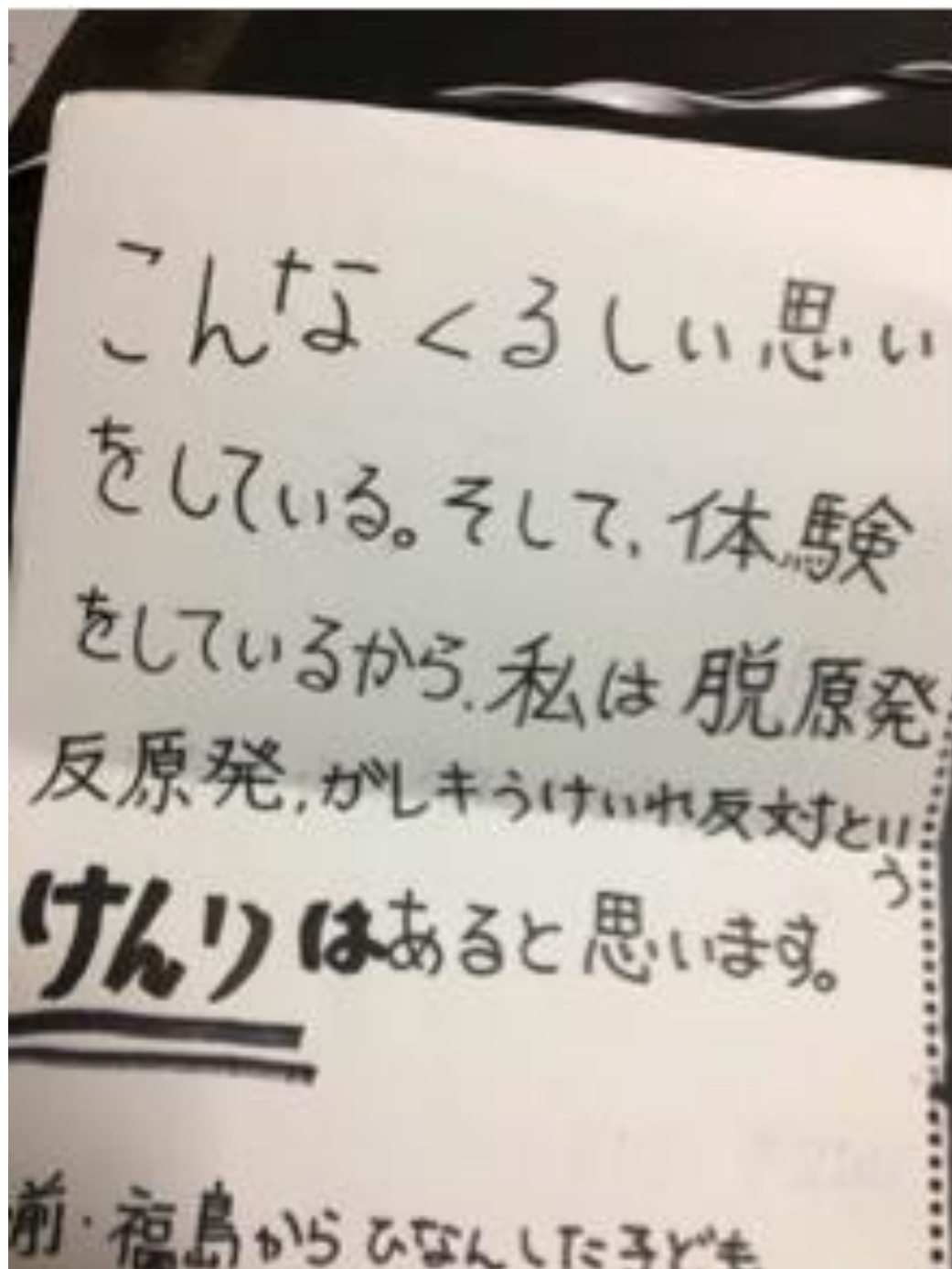
<https://beyondnuclearinternational.org/2019/03/10/fukushima-child-evacuee-speaks-out/>

After “so much pain and sorrow”, a call to end nuclear power

By “Yumi”*

Dear citizens and friends,

My name is Yumi, I'm a high school student now living in Kyoto, Japan.
First, look at this photo of my scribbled note on a sheet of paper.



It reads, "I have been through so much pain and sorrow. So I have the RIGHT to speak out: 'Zero nuclear power! No nukes! No bringing in radioactive contaminated waste!' I am a child evacuee from the Fukushima nuclear disaster."

I wrote it when I was an elementary school student soon after my mother and I were evacuated together from Fukushima to Kyoto.

In nearby communities my mother was crying out against nuclear power and telling the public how she had struggled to evacuate from the nuclear disaster.

At that time, being an elementary school student, I had no choice but to accompany her and listen to her speeches.

As a kid, her stories of the nuclear power accident were too difficult to understand, and to be honest, all a bit boring.

I remember a drawing pad and writing utensils I always used to take with me to pass the time drawing pictures.

In gatherings and meetings, my mother shed tears expressing her “No to nuclear power” pleas to the public.

Suddenly one day, a vision of my grandfather, cousins and the old classmates I had been parted from, and now far away, appeared in my mind’s eye.

I felt hatred for nuclear power and the disaster which caused this tragedy rise up in me.

This was how and why even as a kid I felt compelled to write down those sentences.

Eight years have passed since then, all the feelings I had back then are fading as the years roll by, but whenever I look at this piece of paper I remember those feelings as clearly as if it was just yesterday.

In Fukushima City where my family lived, due to the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster, they detected 600 times higher doses of radiation than before the accident.

However, the government of Japan did not issue any evacuation order for the residents.

So far I haven’t had any serious health issues, but a great fear strikes me whenever I hear the child thyroid cancer incidences in Fukushima prefecture have increased, and especially every time I myself undergo a yearly thyroid medical examination.

One reason for this is the memory of the unstoppable nose bleeds I suffered in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

I have heard that the health effects of radiation can occur not only right after the irradiation, but also after many years, and there are not a few cases of this.

(The video below, featuring Arnie Gundersen of Fairewinds Energy Education, explains in 2016 the already observable the implications of increased thyroid cancers and other health effects.)

Along with my mother, I have become a member of plaintiffs of “the Kansai class action lawsuit for damages caused by the nuclear accident.”

The aim is to fight against the government of Japan and TEPCO, to create a safer society, which of course includes my family and friends in Fukushima, and to prevent another tragic nuclear accident from ever happening again.

Till now I was just following my mother’s footsteps.

However, from now on, as one of the victims of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, I am determined to do what I can do on my own, step by step, just as my mother has done and continues to do.

We the nuclear evacuees of Fukushima thank you for your much-needed continuing support.

Thank you.

Yumi

Yumi’s letter in Japanese

「こんな苦しい思いをしている。そして、体験をしているから、私は、脱原発、反原発、がれき受け入れ反対という権利はあると思います。～福島から避難した子ども～」

これは私と母が福島から京都に避難をしてすぐ、当時、小学生の私が書いたものです。

福島から京都へ避難をすると、私の母は様々な場所で避難の苦労とともに「原発いらない」の声をあげていました。

小学生の私はいつも母とともに会場へ出向き、母の話を聞くことになりました。

小学生の私にとって、原発事故の話は難しく、正直、退屈以外の何者でもありませんでした。

そのため、いつも画用紙と筆記用具を持参し、絵を書いて時間をやり過ごしていたものでした。

それでも、毎回、涙を流しながら「原発いらない」と話す母の姿を見てみると、突然、離れ離れになってしまった祖父やいとこ、そして、クラスメイトのことを思い出し、そのきっかけを作った「原発」や「原発事故」に対して、憎しみの感情を抱くようになり、書いた言葉がこれでした。

あれから 8 年が経ち、当時の感情は月日とともに薄くなっていましたが、この画用紙を見ると、当時の気持ちが昨日のことのよう思い出されます。

私たちが住んでいた福島県福島市は、福島の原発事故により、それまでの 600 倍となる放射線量が計測されました。

しかし、日本政府から避難指示は出されませんでした。

私は今のところ、大きな健康被害は出ていませんが、福島のこどもたちの小児甲状腺がんが増えるたび、また、毎年の甲状腺の検査のたび、大きな恐怖を感じます。

なぜなら、私は福島の原発事故後、どぼどぼと止まらない鼻血を出したからです。

放射能の被害は、すぐに出ることもあれば、何年も経ってから現れることも少なくないと聞きました。

自分たちはもとより、福島の家族や友達みんなが安心して暮らせる社会づくり、二度と悲しい原発事故が起こらないよう、私と母は原発賠償関西訴訟の原告になり、日本政府と東電と闘っています。

これまでは、ただ母についていっただけでしたが、これからは私も母と同様に、福島の原発事故の一被災者として自分にできることを少しずつやっていきたいと思っています。

みなさんの応援もよろしくお願いします。

**For fear of reprisals, neither Yumi nor her mother can use their names or be featured here photographically. We thank her — and Etsuji Watanabe, a member of the Japanese anti-radiation citizen-scientist group ACSIR — for permission to publish her letter.*

Headline photo shows an anti-nuclear protest in Japan in 2011. (Photo: 保守/WikiCommons)

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