

Japan: resistencies to the resumption of N-reactors

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LDP's Fukushima chapter adopts 'no nuclear plant' policy

FUKUSHIMA, June 26—The Fukushima prefectural chapter of the main opposition Liberal Democratic Party declared Sunday that it will no longer promote nuclear power generation.

The LDP, which held power for most of the postwar period until it was defeated by the Democratic Party of Japan in the August 2009 general election, has long promoted nuclear power.

"We will definitely not promote nuclear power generation in the future," said the chapter's policy platform for fiscal 2011 adopted during its regular convention in the wake of the crisis at the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

Kyodo, June 26, 2011

<http://english.kyodonews.jp/news/2011/06/99380.html>

Shareholders preparing protests

Six of the country's nine electric power companies with atomic plants are facing the prospect of "denuclearization" motions being called at their shareholders' meetings Tuesday and Wednesday amid growing public safety fears.

None of the motions is expected to be approved because most are being proposed by individuals who won't be able to muster the two-thirds voting majority needed to change the articles of incorporation in their favor.

But if enough votes are cast against nuclear power, the utilities may come under pressure to rethink their atomic power operations in light of the disaster at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

Hisataka Yamasaki, a Tepco shareholder who has proposed the initiative for roughly 15 years, said that while only 3 to 4 percent of the utility's shareholders vote for it each year, "the percentage should be much higher this year."

The other five utilities facing the motions are Tohoku Electric, Chubu Electric, Kansai Electric, Chugoku Electric and Kyushu Electric.

In letters sent to shareholders, all six utilities expressed opposition to the motions, which variously call for abandoning nuclear power, withdrawing from nuclear power and switching to natural energy sources.

Kyodo, June 27, 2011

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110627a4.html>

Gov't airs program pushing for resumption of Genkai reactors

SAGA (Kyodo) — The government sought local consent Sunday for the resumption of operations of reactors at the Genkai nuclear power plant of Kyushu Electric Power Co. in Saga Prefecture.

In a broadcast aired on the Internet, an official at the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry said the authorities have taken sufficient measures to secure the safety of the Genkai plant following the nuclear emergency at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

It was the first attempt by the central government to brief residents of municipalities that host nuclear power plants on nuclear safety measures. The program was shot and aired at a cable TV studio in the city of Saga, and featured government officials and local residents.

Operation of the Genkai plant's Nos. 2 and 3 reactors have been suspended for regular checkups.

Despite the government's safety assurances, the local residents voiced concerns in the program as to why the state has requested only Hamaoka nuclear power plant in Shizuoka Prefecture to suspend operations.

The Hamaoka plant, which is located in a major active fault zone, was shut down in May following a government request.

In front of the cable TV station, some 150 members of an antinuclear group lodged a protest. They were led by Hatsumi Ishimaru, 59, who said, "This is a program designed to lead to approval for the resumption of operations of the Genkai reactors. We cannot accept that."

Kyodo, June 26, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/news/20110626p2g00m0dm058000c.html>

Fukui gov. resists state's call for resuming nuclear plant operations

FUKUI (Kyodo) — Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa reiterated Wednesday his intention to reject the central government's request to resume operations of nuclear power plants in Fukui Prefecture whose operations are now suspended.

"There's no change in our position of not allowing the resumption of operations at nuclear plants undergoing regular checkups because the government hasn't seriously addressed local residents'

anxiety,” Nishikawa said at the outset of a prefectural assembly meeting.

The central Japanese prefecture is where the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor and 13 commercial reactors are located, more than in any other prefecture. Operations of six have been halted due to regular checkups, problems or other reasons.

Rebooting suspended reactors has been delayed as local governments have expressed concerns about their safety in the wake of the country’s worst nuclear plant crisis triggered by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

On Saturday, the state called for the restart of such reactors to meet summertime electricity demand, saying immediate countermeasures for severe accidents have been taken “appropriately” at the nation’s nuclear power plants, but local governments have appeared cautious.

Nishikawa also criticized the report the central government submitted to the International Atomic Energy Agency earlier this month, saying it does not give convincing reassurances about the safety of operating existing nuclear facilities.

The governor spurned a similar plea from a senior official of the government’s Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency who visited Fukui Prefecture on Tuesday, saying the official’s explanation failed to address the prefectural government’s requests about the safety of nuclear power plants.

Kyodo, June 23, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/06/24/20110624p2a00m0na023000c.html>

Fallen device retrieved from Monju prototype reactor

TSURUGA (Kyodo) — A device that had accidentally fallen into the vessel of the prototype fast-breeder reactor Monju was retrieved Friday after 10 months, paving the way for resuming its operation by the autumn, the plant operator Japan Atomic Energy Agency said.

But due to the nuclear disaster involving the Fukushima Daiichi power plant triggered by the March earthquake and tsunami, it is unclear whether the country’s nuclear fuel recycling project, in which the prototype reactor plays an important role, can move ahead as planned.

The agency hopes to test operating the reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, at 40 percent of its output capacity by the end of March with the aim of achieving full operation by the end of March 2014.

A roughly 12-meter-long, 3.3-ton cylindrical fuel exchange device fell inside the reactor vessel on Aug. 26, 2010, while it was being lifted out for removal after fuel replacement, but attempts last October to retrieve the device failed because it had become misshapen and caught against the vessel’s lid.

A crane was used in the latest operation, which took about eight hours, as the device was taken out together with part of the reactor vessel’s upper lid, which had been obstructing its removal.

Kyodo, June 24, 2011

Quake expert urges Japan to overhaul nuke policy

TOKYO (AP) — Japan needs to overhaul its nuclear policies and may never be safe for atomic power because it is too prone to earthquakes, a leading seismologist and former government nuclear safety adviser said Thursday.

Katsuhiko Ishibashi, a professor emeritus at Kobe University, said virtually all facilities around the country are in danger of the same kind of crisis faced by the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

“It is very difficult to find a safe plant in Japan,” said Ishibashi, who is also a former member of the government’s nuclear safety committee.

Japan is one of the world’s most seismically active countries. Ishibashi said that makes pursuing an aggressive nuclear power strategy more dangerous than in Europe or on the East Coast of the United States.

“From the viewpoint of seismology, all nuclear plants in Japan are in danger of earthquakes,” he said at a news conference at The Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan. He added that from an “economic and engineering perspective” it is difficult to strengthen them.

Ishibashi called for a new review of Japanese nuclear power plants. He has warned about the seismological risks of nuclear energy previously, but Thursday’s comments came amid growing opposition to nuclear power in Japan, which depends on nuclear for about one-third of its electric power.

Earlier this month, anti-nuclear protesters held demonstrations across Japan to mark the three-month anniversary of the March 11 disaster. Some called for the country’s nuclear plants to be shut down immediately.

Japan’s nuclear vulnerability was revealed when the magnitude-9 earthquake hit off Japan’s northeast coast, causing a huge massive tsunami that knocked out power and cooling systems at the Fukushima plant, about 140 miles (225 kilometers) northeast of Tokyo.

The ongoing crisis in Fukushima, which could takes months or years to resolve, has already impacted Japan’s energy policy.

Japan had planned to raise its reliance on nuclear to 50 percent by 2030, but the government has announced it will abandon that target and promote renewable energy instead. The government is also conducting a broad review of the Fukushima disaster and its safety measures.

AP, June 24, 2011

