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Editorial

Dear readers of the WISE/NIRS Nuclear Monitor,

In this issue of the Monitor: we mark the passing of the extraordinary activist and artist Barbara George; Dave Sweeney writes about the international conference 'Uranium Mining: Impact on Health and Environment' held in Tanzania last month; we reprint the statement from the recent annual meeting of the Aboriginal-led Australian Nuclear Free Alliance; and we have three articles on the Fukushima aftermath, covering troubled decontamination operations, the plight of evacuees, the exploitation of clean-up workers, and strong political and public anti-nuclear sentiment in Japan.

The Nuclear News section has reports on: Switzerland, which is implementing a nuclear phase-out policy; the US-Vietnam nuclear deal, which fails to include a legally-binding ban on enrichment and reprocessing; and a 5,000-strong protest against uranium miner Areva in Niger.

Feel free to contact us if you have feedback on this issue of the Monitor, or if there are topics you would like to see covered in future issues.

Regards from the editorial team.
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African action highlights uranium risks

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The global uranium sector remains hard hit by the market fallout from the continuing Fukushima nuclear crisis with the uranium price falling 50% and severe cuts to the share value and profitability of uranium producers since March 2011.

772.4355 Given this reality and the global financial crisis induced lack of access to easy and cheap cash, uranium producers in many parts of the world are cutting costs, corners and operations. They are also increasingly looking to traditional areas of low cost and governance as the place for a new wave of uranium development and exploitation – as a result Africa is firmly on the atomic agenda.

The thinking behind the renewed industry push into Africa was starkly expressed in 2006 when John Borshoff, the bullish and increasingly embattled CEO of Paladin Energy – an Australian company with highly contested operations in Malawi and Namibia – outlined the corporate rationale underpinning the renewed African push by uranium hopefuls: "The Australians and the Canadians

Monitored this issue:

African action highlights uranium risks <i>Dave Sweeney – Nuclear Free Campaigner</i>	1
Barbara George	3
Australian nuclear free alliance meeting statement 2013	3
Fukushima – crooked clean-up, exasperated evacuees <i>Jim Green – Nuclear Monitor</i>	5
Fukushima – exploited workers <i>Jim Green – Nuclear Monitor</i>	6
Political and public anti-nuclear sentiment in Japan <i>Jim Green – Nuclear Monitor</i>	8
Nuclear news - Switzerland – Mühleberg NPP will be shut down early - US-Vietnam nuclear deal – fools' gold standard - Thousands protest against Areva in Niger	



have become over-sophisticated in their environmental and social concerns over uranium mining, the future is in Africa.”

This type of thinking bodes ill for both people and the environment should uranium mining plans become a reality in the growing number of places in Africa where this trade is either expanding or gaining a foothold.

In response to the growing pressure for increased uranium mining in Africa, a group of Tanzanian and European environment, public health and legal rights organisations recently conducted an ambitious uranium awareness initiative in Tanzania to highlight nuclear concerns both there and more widely across and throughout Africa.

The initiative – which took place in early October 2013 – began with a field visit to exploration sites around the Dodoma/Bahi region in central Tanzania – the site of extensive, and contested, uranium exploration.

The country is dry with low rocky ranges, lots of scrubby plains and clay pans and a key feature is an intermittent wetland basin known as the Bahi swamp that supports lots of community and economic activity and food production including cattle herding, fishing and rice.

Much of the exploration is being undertaken by the Australian company Uranex and there is a high level of community concern over possible future impacts on land access and use and water concerns.

Despite being both lawful and widely supported by the local community, the field trip attracted the attention of the local authorities with police arriving and arresting a key community organiser from CESOPE, a Tanzanian environmental organisation that has been leading much grassroots work aimed at increasing awareness of the impacts of uranium mining.

Through a combination of group solidarity, with 50 visiting delegates and participants refusing to leave the local police station, and the intervention of a national parliamentarian and human rights lawyer, all was resolved. But the

incident was a direct and potent insight into the everyday difficulties faced by local organisers and communities.

The site visit was followed by a major community meeting on the health and environmental impacts of uranium mining. Because of a directive from the local authorities this had to be relocated at short notice from the affected village area to the nearby town of Dodoma, the Tanzanian national capital. Despite this attempt to derail the event, the meeting was strong and positive with over 500 people attending and actively engaging.

The keynote presentations from visiting medical and industry experts and critics from North America, Europe, Australia and across Africa were well received and interspersed with songs, chants, enthusiastic Swahili campaign exhortations and theatre pieces and the day generated considerable energy, media and community attention.

Following this meeting the initiative returned to Tanzania’s principal city, Dar Es Salaam, for a major international conference exploring the health and environmental impacts of uranium mining. The event attracted a lot of national media and stakeholder and government attention. It also attracted the attention of the Tanzanian national security service – again it was clear that the uranium issue is very sensitive at this time.

Conference delegates also met with and briefed a range of Tanzanian based stakeholders including the Mines Commissioner, industry regulators, journalists, diplomats and civil society representatives to raise concerns and experiences in relation to the uranium and nuclear industries in their home countries and any lessons and implications that these may have for African nations and communities.

African Uranium Alliance

The conference was followed by a positive meeting of the African Uranium Alliance, a continent-wide group of nuclear free activists who meet annually to share stories and strategies to strengthen effective opposition to the uranium and wider nuclear sector across Africa and to promote the vision of a secure energy future

for the continent that is renewable, not radioactive.

As the majority of delegates departed Dar Es Salaam some Swiss, French, German and Australian visitors joined with Tanzanian civil society representatives on a journey to Songea in the far south of the country to meet with people affected by Mantra Resources Mkuju River project, Tanzania’s most advanced uranium project. Mantra Resources was an Australian company but has been bought out by an international consortium from Russia, Canada and South Africa and now is the project operator rather than owner.

The trip involved long hours of road travel and, despite earlier assurances, a combination of major bureaucracy and miner trickery meant the delegation was unable to actually visit the site. This disappointment again highlighted the lack of transparency surrounding the uranium sector in Tanzania, and elsewhere.

The visit provided a much clearer understanding of both the political and geographical landscape and the opportunity to meet with a range of regional faith, labour rights and environmental representatives who shared their concerns around the threat of uranium mining in the region.

The last two days of the initiative were spent travelling some pretty remote and dusty roads that are slated for a major infrastructure upgrade to facilitate the development of the extractives industry – including planned multiple uranium projects in southern Tanzania. All the signs are there – road camps, clearing for electricity transmission lines, new signage and planned regional port upgrades to handle hazardous materials.

Those who are working for a nuclear free future in Tanzania – as is the case elsewhere – face challenging times. But if the road ahead for the miners is half as bumpy as the one we travelled then they too will face some real hurdles.

The Tanzanian uranium initiative was an important, well-grounded and positive contribution to charting a course

to a nuclear free future in this country and across Africa. The initiative grew from the vision and hard work of Tanzanian civil society groups including the grass roots CESOPE, NaCUM (the National Coalition on Uranium Mining Tanzania) and the LHRC (Legal Aid Human Rights Centre), supported by the European based chapters of the

Uranium Network and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and facilitated by donors including the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

These groups – and the many people on the ground working daily for a cleaner and safer future –

deserve our recognition and respect. And the industry that fuels their concern and global radioactive risk demands our resistance.

More information:
www.uranium-network.org/index.php/conference-in-bahi-dar-es-salaam

Barbara George

Barbara George, founder of Women's Energy Matters (www.womensenergymatters.org) was a multitalented beautiful artist, activist, expert, friend.

772.4356 She died on November 7, 2013 of an aggressive lymphoma shortly after the successful campaign to keep the San Onofre nuclear power reactors closed forever and after many years challenging the California Public Utility Commission to support energy efficiency and renewable energy to replace nuclear, coal and gas.

She saw what needed to be done and did it, encouraging others to do the same. She realised the public needed to know about nuclear power, so she developed a one-woman show, 'Everything You Wanted to Know About Nuclear Power But Were Afraid to Ask', and took it on the road across the US awakening many who would never have gone to a meeting of talking heads. She started her antinuclear work with the Shad Alliance and the successful campaign to shut down Shoreham nuclear power reactor in Long Island, New York which closed after operating for the equivalent of two days over a two year period.

Barbara was part of the Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace

and Justice which had sister camps around the world. She was involved in the Hunters Point Community, one of the last black neighbourhoods in San Francisco, the place where ships from Pacific nuclear weapons bombing had been brought for "cleaning," and the departure point for nuclear waste dumping in the Farallon Islands. She introduced the US Nuclear Information and Resource Service to truckers from Hunters Point who transported radioactive and hazardous waste on a regular basis and they joined a legal challenge to US Department of Transportation and US Nuclear Regulatory Commission efforts to weaken nuclear transport regulations that would then be used to allow nuclear waste to go to regular trash and everyday recycling.

Barbara worked on the long, hard, campaign that stopped the proposed Ward Valley nuclear waste dump on land sacred to five Native American nations and bordering habitat for the endangered desert tortoise. Her relentless work at the California Public Utility Commission exposed meagre funding for renewables and incompetence of

the regulator and the Investor Owned Utilities. Simultaneously, she advocated for public power and helped create the Marin County, California Community Choice Aggregation system, a model for other communities to break from electric companies and buy their own power.

Barbara knew that life is precious and short, so took the time occasionally to let it all go and swim in California's springs, hike on the beaches and enjoy healthy meals with friends. Her home was a workshop full of colour and flowers, art and beauty among voluminous documents and testimony.

How lucky we are to have known and worked with Barbara, a brave, knowledgeable, inspiring and highly skilled intervenor in the corrupt processes that give us nuclear instead of truly clean power.

– Diane D'Arrigo, US Nuclear Information and Resource Service
With thanks to Roger Herried, Abalone Alliance Clearinghouse Archivist and Louise Dunlap

Australian nuclear free alliance meeting statement 2013

The Aboriginal-led Australian Nuclear Free Alliance held its annual meeting in October. Meeting participants issued the following statement:

772.4357 The 2013 meeting of the Australian Nuclear Free Alliance (ANFA) was held on the weekend of October 25-27 on the land of the Peramangk (Perrimak) people in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia. The Alliance brings together Aboriginal people, environment and health groups and trade union representatives concerned about uranium and nuclear projects. Issues and concerns discussed at the meeting included:

Land Rights, Sovereignty and Native Title:

Self-determination and access to country are at the heart of the struggle for Aboriginal rights. Many delegates know first hand that pressure from companies and government to say yes to mining is strong and divisive. In the face of seemingly unstoppable projects people often feel their only option is to participate in negotiations and try to get the best deal they can. Legal structures are set up to assist mining companies and divide communities but if people stay strong and united, unwanted mines can be stopped.

Uranium exploration and mining:

Pressure for uranium mining and exploration across almost all states and territories continues to increase. The nuclear industry puts a lot of effort into talking up its prospects but sustained low uranium prices have caused multiple mining proposals to be shelved or abandoned. Uranium mining and exploration put finite groundwater supplies at risk, particularly in desert regions where maintaining clean water is critical for life and culture. In the past twelve months the newly elected Queensland government reversed a long-standing state ban and declared Queensland open for uranium mining. Many people came from Queensland to attend the meeting, link in with and resist this new push. New South Wales also had good representation as the government there recently reversed a 26 year ban on uranium exploration.

Women's Session:

The women's group heard and talked about the health impacts of radiation. ANFA members know that there is no safe dose of radiation and that being informed about risk is powerful. The importance of clean safe drinking water was spoken about strongly and the group resolved to work with desert communities where bore water is contaminated with uranium to ensure a safe water supply.

Men's Session:

The men heard about the direct and inter-generational threats of uranium mining and exposure to radioactive materials. The group shared experiences and concerns over the lack of available and credible information about the health and environmental impacts of radiation exposures and highlighted the need for improved monitoring. There was discussion around options for increased formal cooperation with trade unions about advancing ways to improve the monitoring deficit and it was agreed that environment and public health NGO's would further communicate with unions about this. The men also discussed alternatives to nuclear medicine and that nuclear medicine does not require uranium mining or waste dumps.

Transport:

Thousands of tonnes of nuclear materials travel across Australia every year to be shipped out of Darwin and Adelaide. Trucks carrying radioactive cargo travel through many towns and food production areas. ANFA supports the right of all communities to refuse the transport of nuclear materials through the places they live and work. The meeting welcomed a strong commitment from MUA representatives that no nuclear materials would be shipped out of ports along the NSW coast.

Radioactive Waste Management:

ANFA acknowledges the long struggle of the Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta against a proposed radioactive waste dump on their land. The current campaign to stop the waste dump at Muckaty in the NT is the same struggle and we all stand together. Muckaty Traditional Owners have travelled tirelessly to gather support from around the country. A federal court challenge is underway and there is a commitment from key health groups, environmental organisations and trade unions to support the community struggle. ANFA supports the call for an independent and public commission into radioactive waste management in Australia.

International Connections:

ANFA has links to the anti-nuclear struggle in many countries. In recent months representatives of ANFA have travelled to Japan, France and Tanzania to share and hear stories of resistance to uranium mining, nuclear power and radioactive waste dumps. The meeting received messages of support for ANFA from the French and African nuclear-free movements and heard a campaign update from the Japanese anti-nuclear campaign. Our struggles are deeply connected: uranium from Australia is causing contamination in Japan and creating radioactive waste in Europe and Australian mining companies are attempting to mine uranium in Africa. ANFA opposes Japanese plans to extract Australian-obligated plutonium from spent nuclear at the Rokkasho reprocessing plant. ANFA stands with and supports all communities resisting the nuclear industry here in Australia and across the world.

On the website the list of attending representatives
www.anfa.org.au

Fukushima – crooked clean-up, exasperated evacuees

A 16-member International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) mission has lavished praise on Fukushima clean-up operations but wants authorities to work harder to convince Japanese citizens to accept higher radiation doses. [1]

772.4358 The IAEA was peddling similar lies in July 2011, when IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano said clean-up work was “moving very smoothly”. [2]

By contrast, the Asahi Shimbun newspaper has run a series of articles this year under the title ‘Crooked Cleanup’. [3] The articles detail a myriad of problems including the involvement of criminal gangs in decontamination work; lax background checks; contractors tipped off about ‘surprise’ inspections of decontamination work; shoddy work practices such as radioactive debris being dumped in rivers; contractors lying about their decontamination work; Environment Ministry officials failing to act on a flood of complaints about shoddy work; work being concentrated around radiation monitors with little or no work carried out at less proximate locations; and much, much more.

A recent Greenpeace survey found that decontamination work has been effective for houses and many parts of major routes, but some lesser-used public roads still have high contamination levels, as do large areas of farmland and mountain areas. Jan Vande Putte, Greenpeace radiation protection adviser, said the decontaminated houses and roads were like “islands” and “corridors” in an otherwise polluted region. It would be “unrealistic” to ask residents to stay off contaminated roads and farmland, he said. [4] Tomoya Yamauchi, a professor of radiation physics at Kobe University, said he found that some decontaminated road surfaces in Fukushima had readings 18 times the target level because caesium had accumulated in cracks in the asphalt. [12]

Securing sites to store contaminated waste is proving extremely difficult. Citizens and local governments have opposed three-year ‘temporary sto-

rage sites’ which the national government wants to establish pending the construction of a mid-term waste storage facility. An Environment Ministry official said: “Given that no prospects are in sight for building an intermediate storage facility for soil and other waste from the decontamination process, people are distrustful and are concerned that such waste could be left abandoned in these temporary storage sites.” [7]

As a result, waste is stored under tarpaulins across much of the Fukushima Prefecture, sometimes close to schools and homes. [5] About 150,000 tons of contaminated waste have been left in the open under tarpaulins – about 30% of all waste from the crisis – due to delays establishing temporary storage sites. A total of 372 temporary storage sites are planned, but so far only 139 have been established. [6]

Evacuees

Some evacuees will have to wait up to three years longer before they can return home as clean-up operations fall behind schedule. The Environment Ministry is revising the timetable for six of 11 municipalities in the exclusion zone. The original plan called for completing all decontamination work by March 2014. [8] Decontamination efforts are on schedule in only four municipalities. “I have run out of patience,” farmer Muneo Kanno told the Asahi Shimbun newspaper. “We villagers are brimming with distrust of the central government and are concerned about whether we can eventually return. We are left deprived of our lives, and our return has been kept on hold.” [9]

Meanwhile there is an unfolding discussion and debate concerning the likelihood that some evacuees will never be able to return home because of the difficulty of reducing radiation to habitable levels. [10,11]

Even in locations where decontamination operations have been completed, many former residents are reluctant to return. Reasons include concerns over the lack of jobs, services, and infrastructure; agricultural restrictions; houses being torn down because of extensive mildew; the unstable situation at the Fukushima nuclear plant and concerns about the adequacy of decontamination work. [12]

Reuters reported in August that just over 500 of the 3,000 former residents of the town of Kawauchi have returned and the “same pattern has played out across Fukushima as the nuclear accident turned the slow drip of urban flight by younger residents into a torrent, creating a demographic skew that decontamination is unlikely to reverse.” [12]

Referring to a man he met during a visit to Japan in 2011, Gregory Jaczko, former chair of the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, told an audience in New York on October 8: “There is nothing more challenging than to look into the eyes of a grandfather who no longer sees his children because they had to move on to find jobs. That is the tragedy and human toll that the Fukushima disaster has enacted on nearly 100,000 people in Japan. You cannot put those impacts in dollar terms, but they are very real.” [13]

Some ugly victim-blaming is emerging. Nuclear apologist Leslie Corrice says evacuees “don’t want to go home because being a Fukushima evacuee is a serious money-making life-style, and they don’t want to lose their lucrative income.” [14] Likewise, an official from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry said some people don’t want to return to their former homes because they don’t want the compensation money from TEPCO to end. A single mother evacuated from near Kawauchi responded to the official’s statement: “There’s no jobs, no shops open, nothing. It’s become an incredibly difficult place to live and yet they’re saying ‘You can go home now’. It’s so unfair to say that. It’s not that simple.” [12]

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(Written by Nuclear Monitor editor Jim)

Fukushima – exploited workers

Recent media reports – including a detailed Reuters investigation – have detailed the difficult and sometimes dangerous situation faced by decontamination and decommissioning workers within and beyond the Fukushima Daiichi plant.[1]

772.4359 Some of the problems arise from the labyrinth of contractors and subcontractors employing a total of about 6,000 people. An estimated 50,000 workers have been involved in the decontamination work since March 2011, and many thousands more will be required in coming years and decades. TEPCO says it has been unable to monitor subcontractors fully. There has been a proliferation of small firms – around 800 companies are active inside the Fukushima plant and hundreds more outside the plant. Legislation regarding Fukushima decontamination work, approved in August 2011, relaxed previous rules and thus contractors have not been

required to disclose information on management or undergo screening. Inexperienced companies rushed to bid for contracts and then turned to brokers to round up workers.[1]

Nearly 70% of the clean-up companies surveyed in the first half of 2013 had broken labour regulations, according to a labour ministry report in July. The ministry's Fukushima office received 567 complaints related to working conditions in the decontamination zone in the 12 months year to March 2013; the ministry issued 10 warnings, but no firm was penalised.[1]

For the thousands of non-TEPCO decontamination workers hired by

subcontractors, the lure of earning decent money in return for dangerous work has proved an illusion. Once money for accommodation has been subtracted, workers are typically left with a few thousand yen each day (1000 yen = US\$10). In some cases, employers withhold danger money.[4]

Workers interviewed by Reuters said wages usually average around US\$12 an hour. With poor wages and conditions, there is a deepening shortage of workers, with about 25% more openings than applicants for jobs in Fukushima Prefecture.[1] Seven hundred TEPCO employees have left the company in the past year alone.[2]

Labour brokers have helped to fill the gap, recruiting people whose lives have reached a dead end or who have trouble finding a job outside the disas-

ter zone. This continues the long-standing pattern of cheap labour from itinerant workers known as 'nuclear gypsies'. "Working conditions in the nuclear industry have always been bad," Saburo Murata, deputy director of Osaka's Hannan Chuo Hospital, told Reuters. "Problems with money, outsourced recruitment, lack of proper health insurance – these have existed for decades." [1]

Yousuke Minaguchi, a lawyer who has represented Fukushima workers, says the Japanese government has turned a blind eye to worker exploitation problems: "On the surface, they say it is illegal. But in reality they don't want to do anything. By not punishing anyone, they can keep using a lot of workers cheaply." [1]

The situation has been exploited by yakuza – organised crime syndicates – which have run labour rackets for generations. Nearly 50 gangs, with 1,050 members, operate in Fukushima Prefecture. [1]

Many workers are scared to draw attention to their exploitation for fear of being blacklisted. "Major contractors that run this system think that workers will always be afraid to talk because they are scared to lose their jobs," said Tetsuya Hayashi, a former decontamination worker. "But Japan can't continue to ignore this problem forever." [1]

In some cases, Reuters reported, brokers have 'bought' workers by paying off their debts – the workers are then forced to work for low wages until they pay off their brokers, under conditions that make it hard for them to speak out against abuses. [1]

Yukiteru Naka, a retired General Electric engineer who helped build some of Fukushima Daiichi's reactors, told *The Guardian* that in the long term, TEPCO will struggle to find enough people with specialist knowledge to see decommissioning through to the end. "There aren't enough trained people at Fukushima Daiichi even now," he said. "For TEPCO, money is the top priority – nuclear technology and safety come second and third. That's why the accident happened. The management insists on keeping the company going. They think about shareholders, bank lenders and the government, but not the people of Fukushima." [3]

Between March 2011 and July 2013, 138 Fukushima workers reached the 100 millisievert (mSv) threshold and thus could no longer be involved in work exposing them to radiation; another 331 had been exposed to between 75 mSv and 100 mSv, meaning their days at the plant are numbered. [4]

Former decontamination worker Watanabe Kai said: "Every penny the company spends in Fukushima is a loss. So the mentality is to save as much

as possible, not to ensure good conditions and safety for workers." Justin McCurry and David McNeill note that: "TEPCO's astonishing penny-pinching became evident during the summer of 2013, when the company revealed it was relying on a skeleton crew to monitor a huge plantation of 1,000-ton makeshift water tanks for leaks. Instead of installing gauges, engineers were checking 1,000 tanks visually by standing on top of them." [4,5]

"I'm particularly worried about depression and alcoholism" among decontamination workers said Tanigawa Takeshi, a professor in the department of public health at Ehime University in western Japan. "I've seen high levels of physical distress and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder." [4]

In early November, TEPCO announced that it would implement measures to improve the working environment, including wage increases and improvements to on-site facilities including break rooms, catering, cell phone communications and transportation. [6] Too little, too late?

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(Written by Nuclear Monitor editor Jim Green.)

Political and public anti-nuclear sentiment in Japan

The pro-nuclear policies of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have been criticised by four former Prime Ministers.

772.4359 Junichiro Koizumi told the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo on November 12: “I think we should go to zero now. If we re-start the reactors, all that will result is more nuclear waste.” He said the LDP is divided equally between those who want to get rid of nuclear power and those who think it’s necessary.[1] “Nobody has had more favourable conditions to achieve a nuclear-free option than Abe,” Koizumi said.[2]

Last year, former Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama joined an anti-nuclear protest outside the residence of then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.[1]

Naoto Kan, the DPJ prime minister when the earthquake and tsunami hit in 2011, told an audience in New York on October 8 that he had been a supporter of nuclear power, but after the Fukushima accident, “I changed my thinking 180-degrees, completely.” He said that in the first days of the accident it looked like an “area that included Tokyo” and populated by 50 million people might have to be evacuated. “There is no other disaster that would affect 50 million people – maybe a war,” Kan said. “There is only one way to eliminate such accidents, which is to get rid of all nuclear power plants.”[1,3,4]

A fourth former prime minister, Morihiro Hosokawa, said in an interview published on November 12 that Abe’s nuclear energy policy was a “crime” and that he was willing to campaign against it.[1]

On October 28, Niigata Prefecture Governor Hirohiko Izumida said TEPCO must give a fuller account of the Fukushima disaster and address its “institutionalized lying” before it can expect to restart reactors. Izumida cited TEPCO’s belated admission in July – following months of denials – that the Fukushima plant was leaking

radioactive substances into the ocean as evidence that TEPCO has not changed. “If they don’t do what needs to be done, if they keep skimping on costs and manipulating information, they can never be trusted,” he said.[5]

Izumida effectively holds a veto over TEPCO’s plan to restart reactors at the Kashiwazaki Kariwa plant, the world’s largest. Even if Japan’s nuclear safety regulators approve restart plans for Kashiwazaki Kariwa, Izumida can effectively block them because of TEPCO’s need to win backing from local officials.

Izumida said he would launch his own commission to investigate the causes and handling of the Fukushima crisis and whether strengthened regulatory safeguards were sufficient to prevent a similar disaster. He warned TEPCO: “If they cooperate with us, we will be able to proceed smoothly. If not, we won’t.”[5]

Izumida urged Japan’s government to strip TEPCO of responsibility for decommissioning the Fukushima plant: “Unless we create a situation where 80-90 percent of their thinking is devoted to nuclear safety, I don’t think we can say they have prioritised safety.”[5]

Izumida also called on the government to make the 6,000 decommissioning and decontamination workers public employees. “The workers at the plant are risking their health and giving it their all. They are out in the rain. They are out at night,” Izumida said. “The government needs to respect their efforts and address the situation.”[5]

And in case Izumida’s message was lost on TEPCO, he added: “There are three things required of a company that runs nuclear power plants: don’t lie, keep your promises and fulfil your social responsibility.”

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters on November 12: “It’s the government’s responsibility to ensure a stable and inexpensive supply of energy. There is no change to our policy of keeping nuclear power to a minimum.”[1]

A member of the Upper House of the Japanese Parliament has been reprimanded for handing a letter to Emperor Akihito at an October 31 imperial garden party expressing his anti-nuclear concerns. The Upper House steering committee summoned Taro Yamamoto, who campaigned as an anti-nuclear independent in the July 2013 election, for questioning about the incident.[6] On November 8, Yamamoto was reprimanded by the Upper House and barred from attending events with the imperial family.[7]

Yamamoto said. “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 Fukushima]. I wanted to explain the plight of children exposed to radiation released after a nuclear accident and people who are working at the facility in the worst conditions.”[6]

In 2011, Yamamoto flew to Saga Prefecture and attempted to break into the governor’s office to protest the restart of a nuclear power plant.[8]

Protest marches and actions

An estimated 40,000 people rallied against nuclear power in Tokyo on October 13. The protest was organised by three anti-nuclear groups – the Metropolitan Coalition against Nukes, ‘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’) – to express their opposition to the government’s push for reactor restarts. After the rally, protesters marched nearby to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and

Industry office as well as the head office of TEPCO.[9,10]

About 600 people attended a march on the evening of Wednesday, October 30. Most of the attendees came straight from their offices. Participants marched nearly 2 kms in the business district and passed by the TEPCO head office. The event organiser's aim was to increase the involvement of office workers, who generally hesitate to join demonstrations, in the anti-nuclear movement.[11]

Many 'Fukushima is Here' photo-actions took place around the world on October 19. For more information visit: www.fukushimaresponse.org
www.facebook.com/FukushimaResponseCampaign
www.fukushimaishere.info

Surveys published in the Asahi and Mainichi newspapers on November 12 found 60% and 54% of respondents respectively agreed that Japan should aim to go nuclear-free. The Asahi newspaper polled 1,751 people by phone on November 9-10, the same days the Mainichi polled 966 people by phone.[1]

Citizens targeted in cyber-attacks

At least 33 groups anti-nuclear citizens groups around Japan have been targeted in a campaign of cyber-attacks since mid-September. They have been on the receiving end of a blizzard of e-mail traffic – more than 2.5 million messages since the attacks began. These are known as 'denial of service' attacks because they aim to obstruct the activities of the targeted organisati-

ons. Experts said there was little doubt that a computer program developed exclusively for the purpose was used.[12] The groups targeted include the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace and the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes. One e-mail read: "Unless we kill all of the anti-nuclear believers, world peace will be never achieved." [12]

Lawyer Yuichi Kaido, acting on behalf of citizens groups, said he is considering filing a criminal complaint against the senders of the e-mails on grounds of forcible obstruction of business ... if the perpetrators can be found.[12]

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(Written by Nuclear Monitor editor Jim Green.)

Nuclear news

Switzerland – Mühleberg NPP will be shut down early

Operator BKW FMB Energy will permanently shut down Switzerland's Mühleberg nuclear power plant in 2019 – three years ahead of the planned 2022 shut down. BKW chair Urs Gasche said the main factors behind the decision were “the current market conditions as well as the uncertainty surrounding political and regulatory trends.” BKW said it will invest US\$223 million to enable continued operation until 2019. The

Swiss canton of Bern is the majority shareholder in BKW.[1]

The single 372 MWe boiling water reactor began operating in 1972. In 2009, the Swiss environment ministry issued an unlimited-duration operating licence to the Mühleberg plant. This decision was overturned in March 2012 by the country's Federal Administrative Court (FAC), which said the plant could only operate until June 2013. BKW subsequently lodged an appeal with

the Federal Court against the FAC's ruling, winning the case this March and securing an unlimited-duration operating licence.[1]

In the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, the Swiss government adopted a nuclear power phase-out policy, with no new reactors to be built and all existing reactors to be permanently shut down by 2034, along with a ban on nuclear reprocessing.[2,3]

1 www.world-nuclear-news.org/C-Political-risks-prompt-early-closure-of-Swiss-plant-3010134.html

2 www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/CNPP2013_CD/countryprofiles/Switzerland/Switzerland.htm

3 www.world-nuclear.org/info/Country-Profiles/Countries-O-S/Switzerland/

US–Vietnam nuclear deal – fools' gold standard

A senior Republican senator wrote to the Obama administration in late October voicing concerns about a recently negotiated nuclear trade agreement with Vietnam that does not explicitly prohibit the country from developing weapons-sensitive enrichment and reprocessing technology.[1]

Bob Corker (Republican-Tennessee.) wrote: “The administration's acceptance of enrichment and reprocessing [ENR] capabilities in new agreements with countries where no ENR capability currently exists is inconsistent and confusing, potentially compromising our nation's nonproliferation policies and goals. ... The absence of a consistent policy weakens our nuclear nonproliferation efforts, and sends a mixed message to those nations we seek to prevent from gaining or enhancing such capability, and signals to our partners that the 'gold standard' is no standard at all. The United States must lead with high standards that prevent the proliferation of technologies if we are to have a credible and effective nuclear non-proliferation policy.”[2]

Corker is requesting a briefing from the Obama administration prior to the submittal of the US-Vietnam trade agreement to Congress. Once the agreement is submitted, the legislative branch will be required

within 90 days of continuous session to decide whether to allow, reject or modify the accord.[1] Shortly after the October 10 signing of the nuclear trade agreement, a US government official told journalists that Hanoi has promised “not to acquire sensitive nuclear technologies, equipment, and processing”. But unidentified US officials told the Wall Street Journal that Vietnam would retain the right to pursue enrichment and reprocessing.[3]

Prior to the October 10 signing, Vietnam repeatedly said it would not accept restrictions on enrichment and reprocessing in a formal agreement with the US. According to Global Security Newswire, Hanoi “may make some effort ... to reassure the non-proliferation community, outside of the agreement text”.[4]

In short, the agreement does not meet the 'gold standard' established in the US/UAE agreement of a legally-binding ban on enrichment and reprocessing [5] – notwithstanding contrary claims from US government officials and many media reports. Instead, it applies a fools' gold standard – a non-legally binding 'commitment'. There are many parallels in nuclear politics, such as India's 'moratorium' on nuclear weapons testing while Delhi refuses

to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. US labour and human rights groups have urged President Obama to suspend free-trade negotiations with Vietnam because of its treatment of workers and government critics. Analysts say a sharp increase in arrests and convictions of government detractors could complicate the nuclear deal when it is considered by Congress.[9]

Vietnam has also signed nuclear cooperation agreements with Russia, France, China, South Korea, Japan and Canada. Plans call for Vietnam to have a total of eight nuclear power reactors in operation by 2027. Russia and Japan have already agreed to build and finance Vietnam's first four nuclear power units – two Russian-designed VVERs at Ninh Thuan and two Japanese reactors at Vinh Hai – although construction has yet to begin.[7] Vietnam intends to build its first nuclear-power reactor in a province particularly vulnerable to tsunamis.[8]

Progress – albeit slow progress – is being made with an IAEA low-enriched uranium fuel bank in Kazakhstan, which IAEA member countries could turn to if their regular supplies were cut. The fuel bank is designed to stem the spread of enrichment capabilities.[6]

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2 www.foreign.senate.gov/press/ranking/release/corker-inconsistency-in-civilian-nuclear-deals-threatens-us-non-proliferation-goals_

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Thousands protest against Areva in Niger

Thousands of residents of the remote mining town of Arlit in Niger took to the streets on October 12 to protest against French uranium miner Areva and support a government audit of the company's operations.[1]

The Nigerien government announced the audit in September and wants to increase the state's revenues from the Cominak and Somair mines, in which the government holds 31% and 36.4% stakes, respectively. The government is also calling on the company to make infrastructure investments, including resurfacing the road between the town of Tahoua and Arlit, known as the "uranium road".[1]

Around 5,000 demonstrators marched through Arlit chanting slogans against

Areva before holding a rally in the city centre. "We're showing Areva that we are fed up and we're demonstrating our support for the government in the contract renewal negotiations," said Azaoua Mamane, an Arlit civil society spokesperson.[1]

Arlit residents complain they have benefited little from the local mining industry. "We don't have enough drinking water while the company pumps 20 million cubic metres of water each year for free. The government must negotiate a win-win partnership," Mamane said. Areva representatives in Niger and Paris declined to comment.[1]

Another resident said: "The population has inherited 50 million tonnes of radioactive residues stocked in Arlit, and Areva continues to freely pump 20 million cubic metres

of water each year while the population dies of thirst."[2]

Areva is also developing the Imouraren mine in Niger, where first ore extraction is due in 2015.[3]

Meanwhile, four French nationals from Areva and contractor Vinci have been released after three years in captivity. They were kidnapped by Islamic militants near the Arlit uranium mine. Seven people were kidnapped on 15 September 2010 by what has been described as the Islamic Mahgreb Al-Qaida group; three were released in February 2011. In May 2013, a terrorist car bomb damaged the mine plant at Arlit, killing one employee and injuring 14.[4]

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Nuclear Monitor #765, 1 Aug 2013, 'Uranium mining in Niger'

WISE / NIRS Nuclear Monitor

The World Information Service on Energy (WISE) was founded in 1978 and is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The Nuclear Information & Resource Service (NIRS) was set up in the same year and is based in Washington D.C., US.

WISE and NIRS joined forces in the year 2000, creating a worldwide network of information and resource centers for citizens and environmental organizations concerned about nuclear power, radioactive waste, proliferation, uranium, and sustainable energy issues.

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