

# Japan: Flawed Official No-nuke Plan and ongoing news

Monday 29 October 2012, by [IIDA Mai](#), [Jiji Press](#), [JOHNSTON Eric](#), [KAGEYAMA Yuri](#), [Kyodo News](#), [NAGATA Kazuaki](#)  
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## **U.S. energy official voices concern over zero nuclear energy target**

WASHINGTON - U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman has voiced concerns about Japan's apparent plans to end its nuclear energy dependence by the 2030s, Democratic Party of Japan executive Seiji Maehara said Wednesday.

At a meeting with the DPJ's policy chief Tuesday, Poneman said that if Japan takes such steps it might have unexpected effects on the United States and other concerned parties, Maehara said.

In a revamp of its energy and environmental strategy, the government is expected to state that it will aim to eliminate all reliance on nuclear energy.

At his meeting with Poneman, Maehara explained that Japan will set a target but stop short of fully committing to it. This is because sellers of oil and natural gas would demand unreasonable prices should Japan declare its commitment to zero reliance, Maehara told Poneman.

Poneman replied that Japan must make its own decision on energy issues but requested measures to minimize any negative effects that may arise if Japan sets a zero nuclear target, according to Maehara. Japan should stay flexible about implementing the strategy, Poneman added, noting the importance of holding further discussions. If the world's third-biggest economy snaps up fossil fuels, energy prices will change significantly, Poneman was quoted as saying.

Washington hopes to help Japan diversify its energy sources, but Japan also needs to take into account the possibility that such diversification will not progress steadily, he told Maehara. Japan should examine economic efficiency and safety, Poneman said, advising Japan to exercise caution if it carries out any drastic changes to its energy policy.

## **U.S. urges Japan to keep stored plutonium to a minimum**

The United States has urged Japan to keep the amount of plutonium it stores at a minimum, following the recent shift in energy strategy that aims to end atomic power generation by the 2030s, several Japanese and U.S. government sources said Wednesday.

Washington has aired concerns over the possibility of nuclear proliferation since the government decided last month to continue to reprocess spent nuclear fuel even though it appears inconsistent with the zero nuclear reliance target, the sources said.

The United States has said keeping the fuel recycling policy, despite the planned phaseout of nuclear power generation, would undermine the basis of the current Japan-U.S. civilian nuclear cooperation pact, under which Washington approves Tokyo's spent fuel reprocessing, according to the sources.

The 1988 accord promotes bilateral technological cooperation in the nuclear energy area. Washington gave the green light to Japan's commercial use of fuel reprocessing technologies that can be diverted to military use based on Tokyo's promise in the international arena not to keep excess plutonium.

Japan is the only non-nuclear state in the world that has a commercial nuclear fuel reprocessing facility. What appears to be a contradictory energy policy could adversely affect negotiations between Tokyo and Washington to revise the nuclear cooperation pact by 2018.

Shortly before the government decided on the new energy strategy on Sept. 14, Seiji Maehara, then policy chief of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, and Akihisa Nagashima, then special adviser to Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda for foreign and defense matters, briefed senior U.S. officials on the fresh policy.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman and other officials raised concerns about the increase of plutonium, which can't be reused in Japan under the zero nuclear reliance policy, the sources said.

They were also worried that fossil fuel prices would soar in the global market if the world's third-largest economy abandons nuclear power generation and depends more on such fuels.

The officials also pointed out that the nuclear phaseout would hamper exports of nuclear power generation technologies by Japan-U.S. joint ventures to the rest of the world, giving advantage to rival exporters Russia and China, according to the sources.

Washington expressed particular concern over the issue of plutonium and called on Tokyo, which has adhered to international nonproliferation rules, to keep the amount of the weapons-grade fuel at a minimum.

The United States requested that Japan flexibly implement the new energy strategy and that the

Noda Cabinet refrain from adopting it at a Cabinet meeting, the sources said.

Before the Fukushima disaster that led to the reversal of nuclear energy policy, the government had planned to reprocess all spent nuclear fuel and reuse extracted plutonium and uranium as reactor fuel at 16 to 18 light-water reactors.

Based on the bilateral nuclear cooperation pact, Japan obtained prior approval of the United States to use fuel made of U.S.-provided uranium and to reprocess fuel spent at U.S.-made nuclear reactors.

**Kyodo Press**, October 4, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121004a5.html>

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### **Work resumes at Oma nuclear plant**

Electric Power Development Co. (J-Power) said Monday it has resumed construction of a nuclear plant in Aomori Prefecture, becoming the first utility to do so since the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 complex last year.

Speaking in the town of Oma, site of the construction project, J-Power President Masayoshi Kitamura said he expects the plant's start to be delayed for at least about 18 months from the initially planned November 2014.

To explain the decision to resume the work, Kitamura visited Oma, located at the northernmost tip of Honshu, and two adjacent villages. He told reporters Monday that the three municipalities accepted the company's decision.

The government is allowing utilities to finish building reactors that have already been approved.

The decision is controversial, seeming to contradict another government plan to phase out nuclear power generation by the 2030s and forbid construction of new plants under an energy strategy worked out in September.

"Given that it has become clear how nuclear plants in the process of construction should be handled, we have decided to resume construction work with the understanding of locals," J-Power said in a statement.

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yukio Edano told a news conference in Tokyo that it is up to the operator to decide to resume the work, but he added that the new nuclear regulatory commission will check the safety of the plant before it goes into operation.

The Oma plant, which J-Power started building in May 2008, was slated to open in November 2014. The Fukushima crisis halted construction when it was about 40 percent complete.

The plant will house an advanced boiling-water reactor, with plans to use plutonium-uranium mixed oxide (MOX) fuel, which contains plutonium extracted from spent fuel.

"The plant will be highly safe and reliable, using the most advanced technology," the company said

in the statement.

Local governments in Aomori Prefecture have called for construction of the plant to continue.

Mitsuharu Kanazawa, the mayor of Oma, said he is "extremely relieved" that the utility will resume the project, which will create jobs for the town.

But the city of Hakodate, Hokkaido, which lies within a 30-km radius of the plant, separated by a strait, is against the plan.

**Kyodo**, October 2, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121002a4.html>

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### **Hakodate eyes lawsuit to stop new nuke plant**

HAKODATE, Hokkaido - The city of Hakodate may file a lawsuit to demand suspension of the construction of a nuclear power plant in nearby Oma, Aomori Prefecture, according to its mayor.

Hakodate Mayor Toshiki Kudo said it would be the first suit in Japan by a municipality demanding the stoppage of a nuclear power plant's construction.

The city claims that adequate safety steps have not been taken regarding the Oma plant. Hakodate is located across the Tsugaru Strait, 23 km from the Oma plant site.

The city may file the suit next spring, when construction is expected go into full swing, Kudo said.

Electric Power Development Co., better known as J-Power, announced Monday it has resumed construction that was suspended after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami triggered the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear disaster.

It is the first work on a new nuclear power station in Japan since the Fukushima crisis erupted.

**Jiji Press**, October 3, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121003a5.html>

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### **Futaba worst hit by Fukushima fallout**

**Kamihatori district exposed to 1,590 microsieverts per hour before first explosion at nuke plant**

FUKUSHIMA - The area most intensely irradiated by the meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant was the Kamihatori district in the town of Futaba, about 5.6 km northwest of the facility, data collected by the prefecture show.

Just before a hydrogen explosion ripped apart the No. 1 reactor building, the plant's cohort was being zapped by 1,590 microsieverts of radiation per hour at 3 p.m. March 12, 2011, the day after the Great East Japan Earthquake and ensuing tsunami crippled the complex, data retrieved from monitoring posts showed Friday.

At present, the government's limit for the public is set at 1,000 microsieverts for an entire year.

When the natural disasters struck the Tohoku region on the afternoon of March 11, they triggered a blackout at the Tokyo Electric Power Co. plant that led to three core meltdowns. A hydrogen explosion blew up the building housing the No. 1 reactor at 3:36 p.m. the following day.

Given that the record dose was detected before the explosion, "radioactive materials must have been leaking even before the blast, and wind direction may have played a role," an official said.

The first explosion occurred after steps had been taken to vent steam from the No. 1 reactor on the morning of March 12 to reduce rapidly building pressure.

The prefecture has been retrieving data from its 25 monitoring stations near the plant after some were hampered by communications disruptions or power outages caused by the quake and tsunami.

**Kyodo Press**, September 23, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120923a3.html>

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## **No-nuke plan official, quick to draw flak**

### **Policy called poll ploy to save DPJ, hit by fuel cycle foes, Keidanren**

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda's Cabinet on Friday officially adopted a new long-term energy strategy that calls for elimination of nuclear power dependency by the end of the 2030s, but the new goal quickly came under fire from experts, antinuclear activists and lobbying groups.

Critics said the new energy goals, published in a 20-page policy paper, lack key details about how to achieve the target and will still maintain the existing nuclear fuel recycling program, which they say is a major contradiction with the zero-nuclear goal.

The Democratic Party of Japan-led government is advocating the zero-nuclear policy only because it is desperate to curry favor with voters ahead of the next Lower House election, in which the party is expected to suffer a crushing defeat, they said.

Polls conducted by major media companies have indicated a majority of the public wants to end reliance on nuclear energy sometime in the future. The polls were carried out after the March 2011 triple-meltdown crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant caused widespread nuclear fallout on the land and sea, massive evacuations and revelations that the nation's atomic plants, all coastal, had not prepared adequate quake-tsunami defenses. The Fukushima crisis continues.

"I think the DPJ and the government just wanted to set a 'zero' goal because a general election is coming up," said Takeo Kikkawa, a professor at Hitotsubashi University and an energy policy expert.

“The decision to approve this new energy strategy is premature,” said Kikkawa, who has taken part in a panel under the industry ministry to discuss the long-term energy strategy.

The government also indicated the zero-nuclear policy could be revised, depending on such factors as progress in the development of renewable energy and public opinion.

In addition, the paper said the government will temporarily reactivate reactors that have been halted amid the Fukushima nuclear crisis once the new atomic regulatory authority that debuts next week confirms their safety.

The paper does not explain how any reactor restart would be consistent with the eventual goal of ending all reliance on nuclear power.

The new energy goals don't touch on crucial details in abolishing nuclear power, including likely electricity rate hikes following the total halt of reactors, how to increase renewable energy and how to win the consent of local governments that host nuclear facilities.

The new energy plan says the government will maintain the existing program to recycle uranium and plutonium fuels after it was argued that the recycling program is needed to keep consuming plutonium for peaceful purposes and prevent proliferation of nuclear materials.

Consideration was also given to the prefectures still hoping to maintain facilities related to the recycling, the government said.

Keeping the recycling program in place “is proof that the current government is not serious about phasing out nuclear power,” argued antinuclear activist Aileen Mioko Smith of the Kyoto-based group Green Action.

Kikkawa said if the government wants to really end nuclear energy, it needs to be more concrete about how to deal with the expected challenges, including how to get local governments, such as Fukui and Aomori prefectures, to give up atomic facilities that have been long lucrative cash sources.

Both prefectures, which host nuclear plants and fuel-recycling facilities, have already expressed opposition to the zero scenario and want the government to give them a better explanation moving forward.

Kikkawa also said it is unclear how the government will address possible negative effects from the drastic reduction of nuclear power, such as electricity rate hikes. The zero-nuclear policy will erode the profitability of utilities and eventually push up power rates for end-users, given the massive amount of fossil fuels needed for thermal power generation.

“Through national debates (over energy policies), it has been confirmed that many people and companies are concerned” that the zero-nuclear option could critically damage their daily lives and industries, the government said in the policy paper.

The paper said the government will construct more natural gas pipelines and try to stably procure more liquefied natural gas from North America to keep fuel costs low.

Yet it does not show any prediction on how much the LNG shift will additionally cost if all nuclear plants are abolished.

“It's extremely regrettable that what our company advocated was not accepted in the government's

decision. The policy of zero nuclear reactors in operation in the 2030s is not a government action that defends the lifestyle of the people” Shosuke Mori, chairman of the Kansai Economic Federation and Kansai Electric Power Co., wrote in a press release.

Kepeco President Makoto Yagi warned that the new energy goals damaged the trust of the people in Fukui Prefecture, which hosts 11 Kepeco reactors, including the two at the Oi plant that were restarted in July – the only ones now running.

“Aiming for zero nuclear power plants means an increase in fossil fuel prices, utility bills, problems with global warming, and problems ensuring necessary personnel for nuclear power,” Yagi said, also in a press release.

Hirokazu Yonekura, chairman of the powerful Keidanren business lobby, said Thursday he called Noda and told him the zero scenario is unacceptable because the resulting higher electricity fees will hurt businesses and the economy.

“The ruling parties should not be swayed by elections. They should think about the future of this country,” he said.

Under the new plan, the government will try to increase the use of renewable energy from the current 10 percent to 30 percent of the country’s total energy mix by 2030.

Setting ambitious renewable energy targets takes coordination at the top levels of government, some critics said. Some countries like India have created a ministry of renewable energies, and Tomas Kaberger, executive board chair at the Japan Renewable Energy Foundation, said the sheer volume of work will require Japan to do something similar.

“If you look at European countries that have successfully developed renewable energy, you’ll see they all have some sort of institution for that purpose. I can clearly see where Japan will need a government institution of some sort, be it a ministry or an agency, tasked with officiating the development of renewable energy and manned by people who will do just that,” he said.

**KAZUAKI NAGATA and ERIC JOHNSTON**, *Japan Times* Staff writers, September 15, 2012  
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120915a1.html>

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## **Energy shift generates hope, anxiety — Plan to phase out nuclear power gutsy but fraught with unknowns**

About a year and a half into the Fukushima nuclear crisis, Japan’s energy policy is at a turning point as the government vows to pursue the elimination of atomic power by the 2030s.

But the government’s new policy, which calls for a significant rise in renewable energy, has divided opinion, with some looking at it with hope and others with anxiety.

The policy shift could be a big opportunity for businesses involved in renewable energy and energy-saving technologies.

Other companies also stand to gain, including a unit run by mobile phone operator Softbank Corp.

that is gearing up to build solar plants and wind farms.

Concerns remain, however, over how the transition will affect society overall, including economically.

“I think we should increase the use of renewable energy, but it is just too risky to place too much hope on it,” Keigo Akimoto, a visiting professor at the University of Tokyo, said, citing concerns over the stability of renewable energy, its output, how fast it will spread and the impact of the expected rise in electricity bills.

Akimoto, an environmental policy researcher, said the government’s plan to triple electricity output from solar and other renewable energy sources to 300 billion kwh by 2030 from their 2010 level is “too optimistic.”

Under its earlier estimate, the government said the number of houses with solar panels should be jacked up to 12 million nationwide from 0.9 million in 2010 to help reduce nuclear power to zero in 2030. It also urged a rapid expansion in wind farms to 610 by 2030, up from just 30 in 2010.

In 2010, nuclear power supplied about 26 percent of the nation’s energy needs. Then came the March 2011 triple-meltdown crisis at the temblor- and tsunami-struck Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, an event that precipitated the shutdown of the rest of the nation’s 50 viable reactors.

The disaster destroyed public confidence in the nuclear power program, which had for decades been promoted as safe, cheap and clean. It also prompted the government to declare the new, zero-nuclear policy goal on Friday that promises to do away with atomic power in the 2030s.

Before the Fukushima crisis, the government planned to boost Japan’s reliance on nuclear power to 53 percent by 2030.

According to government data, if Japan abandons nuclear power by 2030, the average monthly electricity bill for nonsingle households will swell to ¥32,243 from ¥16,900 in 2010. Abandoning nuclear power will also weigh down gross domestic product, the government data said.

But Hiroshi Takahashi, research fellow at Fujitsu Research Institute, believes replacing nuclear with renewable energy is “not impossible” and that Japan should take this opportunity to initiate a transformation of its industrial structure.

“I think we are confronting the issue of deciding what kind of industrial structure the nation should seek,” he said.

While affirming that Japan’s traditionally strong manufacturing sector is definitely important, Takahashi said that energy efficiency should be a part of that.

“Shouldn’t we shift to creating more value-added products that require less electricity?” he asked, citing renewable energy and power conservation services as areas requiring more focus.

The government plans to encourage competition in the power market by liberalizing the retail electricity market and reforming the electricity transmission system as well.

Achieving the transition will require steady enforcement of the feed-in tariff scheme introduced in July to promote renewable energy, a revamped electricity grid and looser regulation, Takahashi said, adding the government should be more aggressive in encouraging citizens’ efforts to both generate and save electricity.



National policy minister Motohisa Furukawa said after formulating the energy policy that achieving the “green energy revolution” could reverse the current assumption that electricity consumption trends bear a direct relationship to economic expansion.

“Some people may say it is impossible. But think about it. Who on Earth expected 20 years ago to see mobile phones and smartphones used so much in today’s society?” he asked at a press conference.

“I’m confident that the realization of the green energy revolution can lead to a series of innovations, like the IT (information and technology) revolution did, and bring significant change to society in the near future,” Furukawa said.

But he noted that its success hinges on the degree of the public’s participation, and that this could determine when Japan can achieve a nuclear-free society.

#### **MAI IIDA**

Kyodo Press, September 16, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120916a5.html>

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### **New no-nuke plan has vested interests worried**

The official declaration Friday that Japan will pursue a nuclear phaseout by the 2030s is drawing opposition and concern from areas that host atomic facilities and Western countries closely linked to related projects in Japan.

Aomori Prefecture, home to a nuclear fuel recycling plant in the village of Rokkasho, is wary it could become the final disposal site for spent fuel and radioactive waste if the government terminates its recycling policy.

The new energy policy states that fuel reprocessing will have to continue for a while, but with an eye to opening talks on a rethink.

Issei Nishikawa, the governor of Fukui Prefecture, which has the highest concentration of nuclear reactors in the country at 14, said the government’s decision “contradicts the prime minister’s remarks in June, when he said nuclear power generation is an important source of energy.”

“The prime minister should go back to his original stance and promote nuclear power policy by ensuring safety,” Nishikawa said at a prefectural assembly meeting.

Yasushi Furukawa, the governor of Saga, home to the Genkai nuclear power plant, raised the risk of global warming.

“If we increase thermal energy as an alternative, how are we going to reduce carbon dioxide emissions?” he asked.

Internationally, Britain and France, where Japan sends its spent nuclear fuel for reprocessing, after which it is shipped back, are concerned about how the decision will affect the future viability of those facilities.

The United States is also expressing concern because the use of Japanese nuclear technology has been spreading after a three-decade moratorium on nuclear power plant construction.

Public reaction has been mixed, with some voicing distrust in the government's resolve and others hailing the move.

Some experts doubted the viability of the new energy policy and saw it as a populist political measure ahead of upcoming leadership elections in the major political parties.

**Kyodo Press**, September 16, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120916a6.html>

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### **Head of nuclear disaster investigation defends report**

The head of a major investigation into the Fukushima nuclear disaster is defending his report against criticism that his panel avoided blaming individuals and instead blamed elements of the nation's culture.

Kiyoshi Kurokawa, a doctor who headed the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission, said he sticks with his view that the catastrophe was "Made in Japan," underlining collusion among the regulators and the utility that set off the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl. He said his panel intentionally stopped short of naming individual culprits.

"No one takes responsibility in Japan, even those in positions of responsibility," Kurokawa said last week at his commission office in Tokyo. "This is unique to Japan, a culture that stresses conformity, where people don't complain."

People are complaining, however, about the commission's report, not only for lacking specifics on responsibility but for making statements on Japanese culture that appeared in the English-language version of the document but not the Japanese version.

The 641-page report, released in July, compiled interviews with 1,167 people and scoured documents obtained from nuclear regulators and Tokyo Electric Power Co., the utility that ran Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

A devastating March 2011 tsunami set off by a 9.0-magnitude quake destroyed backup generators and sent the quake-damaged Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant into multiple meltdowns and explosions. About 150,000 people were eventually evacuated from a 20-km no-go zone, and fears remain in Fukushima that cancer and other illnesses will grow as a result of radiation.

The independent panel of 10 experts, including a lawyer, former diplomat and chemist, was appointed by the legislature. It is a style of investigation that was common in Western nations but unprecedented in Japan.

The panel's report has drawn fire from Japanese and overseas critics alike.

"One searches in vain through these pages for anyone to blame," Columbia University professor and Japan expert Gerald Curtis wrote in an opinion piece submitted to the Financial Times. "To pin the

blame on culture is the ultimate cop-out. If culture explains behavior, then no one has to take responsibility.”

Tatsujiro Suzuki, vice chairman of the government Atomic Energy Commission, which promotes nuclear technology, was critical of the differences between the English and Japanese versions of the report. He said it appeared to be putting on one face to the Japanese people, while presenting another abroad.

The preface of the English version said, “What must be admitted Å\ very painfully Å\ is that this was a disaster ‘Made in Japan.’ Its fundamental causes are to be found in the ingrained conventions of Japanese culture: our reflexive obedience; our reluctance to question authority; our devotion to ‘sticking with the program’; our groupism and our insularity,” he wrote in the English version.

The passage wasn’t in the Japanese message. But Kurokawa said that he made similar points in other parts of the report in Japanese.

He said he wanted to reach a global audience by pointing to “amakudari,” the longtime practice of handing plum jobs to retired bureaucrats, the nation’s half-century domination by a single party, and elitist employees taking lifetime jobs for granted, as a peculiar “mindset” that fosters irresponsibility, slow decision-making and dubious governance.

“I didn’t want to say it, but it is ‘Made in Japan,’” Kurokawa said. “This is about Japanese culture and values. There is nowhere else quite like that.”

Tokyo prosecutors recently accepted a request by a group of lawyers to carry out a probe into criminal charges of professional negligence against regulators and the plant’s management. If prosecutors move ahead, their power to subpoena records, raid offices and question officials would be far greater than that of Kurokawa’s panel.

Kurokawa said such an investigation was welcome as a sign of a “healthy democracy.” He said his six-month investigation offered plenty of fodder for a criminal inquiry. He said it showed that bureaucrats brushed off evidence of tsunami risks that had been clear as far back as 2006, and that representatives from international watchdog groups took travel money from the utilities. He said it may not have the names, but the dates and circumstances are there so all the investigators have to do is check, he said.

Japanese media have reported that prosecutors waited for Kurokawa’s report before deciding to take up a criminal investigation. The report’s finding that the accident was preventable and man-made made it more likely the prosecutors would investigate.

**YURI KAGEYAMA**, AP, September 17, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120917a5.html>

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## **Cabinet fails to OK new nuclear strategy: Deadline for abolishing atomic energy by 2030s not endorsed**

In a shocking reversal, the Cabinet on Wednesday failed to approve the government’s new energy

policy by watering down its main goal – the elimination of Japan’s reliance on nuclear energy by the 2030s – in a document needed to confirm the full power of its endorsement.

The document that the Cabinet signed off on stirred speculation that it gave special consideration to big business and governments that benefit from hosting nuclear facilities, the main entities opposed to the publicly favored zero option.

The endorsement document, which the government put up for an official Cabinet decision on Wednesday, drops the 2030s deadline for eliminating atomic energy and states that the government will hold talks with local governments and the international community based on the policy and “implement (the policy) by conducting ongoing studies and review.”

The full document on the government’s new energy strategy was meanwhile attached to the approval document as “reference material.”

The government usually takes up major bills and other important issues with the entire Cabinet to ensure they will be endorsed as “Cabinet decisions” – signaling that future Cabinets also will be held responsible for the decision made. If major issues are only “reported to the Cabinet” or “acknowledged by the Cabinet,” however, they are considered less binding than official “Cabinet decisions.”

The turnabout came after the government’s new energy strategy was reported to Tuesday’s meeting of the national strategic council, whose member include private-sector experts opposed to the zero-nuclear policy.

Of the five private experts on the council, three were absent from Tuesday’s meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda: Hiromasa Yonekura, chairman of the Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren), who opposes denuclearization, former Bank of Japan Deputy Gov. Kazumasa Iwata and Sadako Ogata, former president of the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

But Japan Association of Corporate Executives Chairman Yasuchika Hasegawa, who was in attendance, requested that the council scrap the plan to abandon nuclear power, saying it was strange.

Nobuaki Koga, president of the Japanese Trade Union Confederation (Rengo), also questioned the strategy.

Internal affairs minister Tatsuo Kawabata said the government still needed to explain the principle behind the strategy.

The government, however, claimed Wednesday that it was still sticking to the new policy, with trade minister Yukio Edano telling a news conference that its full content was “authorized” by the Cabinet because the decision says the government will take actions “based on” the strategy.

The new energy strategy announced Friday states that Japan will devote all policy resources to end nuclear power in the 2030s.

Edano did not clarify why the strategy itself was not included in the Cabinet document, saying only that there are “several ways” to handle the government’s decision-making at Cabinet meetings.

Nuclear disaster minister Goshi Hosono separately said it was “a better way to go through such decision-making as we still have various uncertain factors.”

Business lobbies have grown more vocal in their criticism of the nuclear-free goal, fearing that giving up atomic power will lead to electricity rate hikes that will adversely affect the economy.

**Kyodo & Jiji Presse**, September 20, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120920a1.html>

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## **Nuke watchdog a 'cosmetic' change: New regulatory agency faulted for ties to discredited predecessor**

Created to replace a nuclear regulatory system discredited by the Fukushima disaster, the new five-member Nuclear Regulation Authority, launched Wednesday, is already being faulted as a cosmetic change.

Experts note that most of the employees at the NRA's secretariat are the same bureaucrats who were working at the old regulatory authority, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency.

Nothing has been done, they said, to dismantle the old bureaucratic culture that blurred the lines of responsibility and made regulators who lacked independence and nuclear expertise reluctant to force utilities to toe the line.

For example, a new regulation forbidding personnel from returning to their original ministries to keep them focused on the new entity has been made toothless by a five-year moratorium.

What's needed to change the culture, they said, are outside pressures to monitor the new system, and government-backed programs, such as those providing overseas training, to keep bureaucrats motivated.

"The most important point is that the secretariat that supports the highly independent five-member commission must have independence and expertise," said Shuya Nomura, a professor at the Chuo Law School who was a member of the Diet panel that probed the causes of the Fukushima No. 1 triple meltdown crisis.

In its final report released in July, the Diet panel said that NISA failed to enforce regulations because the utilities, with their greater nuclear expertise, were able to get the upper hand, a situation known as "regulatory capture."

As a part of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which was promoting nuclear power, NISA's independence was always in shaky, and it finally came under heavy fire for that.

To correct the problem, the new regulatory body, which has a staff of about 480, including more than 300 from NISA, will operate as an agency under the Environment Ministry to avoid the influence of the ministries tasked with promoting nuclear power, and to support a new highly autonomous five-member commission.

Nevertheless, the commission's power and autonomy are compromised because "the secretariat under the commission that handles actual work is still pretty much the same as NISA, which means we can't really expect the culture to be changed," said Hiroshi Tasaka, who was a special adviser to

former Prime Minister Naoto Kan and helped deal with the Fukushima disaster.

Thus the public's focus on the commission is misguided, the experts said. Although antinuclear activists claim that some of the commissioners, including Chairman Shunichi Tanaka, former vice chairman of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, are unqualified to run an independent watchdog because of their previous ties to the nuclear industry, the key is the secretariat. Simply separating a regulatory section from METI will not solve the problem because the government has taken a lax stance on personnel oversight.

In general, METI bureaucrats are reassigned every few years, mainly based on seniority, and often shuttle between the nuclear promotion and regulation sections. Consequently, they would usually avoid boldly changing the policies of their predecessors.

Because METI's mission was to promote nuclear power, there was no incentive to place its best people at NISA to tighten regulations, according to Nomura of Chuo Law School.

While experts at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission are qualified to operate reactors, Kenkichi Hirose, former head of NISA, told the Diet panel that officials were kept busy with paperwork, Nomura said.

Although the government is set to bar bureaucrats from returning to their ministries, loopholes in the rule remain, the experts warned. For example, a moratorium has been placed on that rule for the first five years of the new agency's debut, allowing bureaucrats to go back to their ministries if they choose.

"The next five years will be critically important to grow a new regulatory culture," so the moratorium should not be applied so that they will focus on their job, said Tasaka, a professor of business at Tama University who has a doctorate in nuclear engineering.

The secretariat needs to be a body that people will want to work for, said Nomura, citing the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission as an example of a place considered prestigious by U.S. federal workers.

Furthermore, it's necessary to have outsiders scrutinize the performance of the new regulatory body, Tasaka said. For instance, an expert from overseas, such as a former NRC member, should be included to play a role similar to that of an outside director at a private firm. However, doing this may require changing the law to allow foreigners to take such a position.

The Diet should also form a committee to check the NRA and its secretariat, Tasaka said.

"It requires tremendous effort to reform an institutional culture whether it's a private firm or public organization . . . It must have outside pressure," said Tasaka.

**KAZUAKI NAGATA**, *Japan Times* Staff writer, September 20, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120920a3.html>

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