

Japan - Twelve years after the Fukushima nuclear disaster: for the world without nuclear power

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March 11 marks 12 years since the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami devastated northeastern Japan, and the Fukushima nuclear disaster of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). The 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster which released radioactive caesium-137 equal to that of 168 Hiroshima bombs. Following the lifting of evacuation orders of last year, residents were finally able to live in the disaster area. But only 18% of residents returned to municipalities affected by the disaster.

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Despite this situation, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and the Nuclear Mafia sponsored by the government are trying to keep the dangerous 45-year-old nuclear reactors running for decades to come and are planning to build new nuclear plants. And Fumio Kishida is also trying to shift about half of the reconstruction tax to the budget for large military expansion, which is an obstacle post-disaster reconstruction. It is time to remember Fukushima again for our future.

Slow recovery and lingering anxiety about radiation

Futaba Town is the last municipality to see an evacuation order lifted among other municipalities subject to the orders in the wake of the disaster. Last year, the last evacuation order was lifted in the Town which hosts the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. However, not even 1% of the residents have returned to the Town. The final destination of contaminated soils transported to interim storage sites has not yet been specified. In addition, melted fuel debris has not even been sampled, let alone carried out.

Under the situation, the Japanese government is planning to recycle the contaminated soils for public works. At least about half a century or more will be required for decommissioning of the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Until this summer, more than a million tons of treated water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear power plant will be released into the ocean. It is feared that further economic damages to fisheries and agriculture will be caused.

The Japanese government reluctant to abolish nuclear plants

The Fukushima nuclear disaster, as well as the Three Mile Island and The Chernobyl disasters, made us realize again that we cannot control the nuclear reactors. Twelve years ago, the radiation dose in a city of Fukushima was 1.2-1.3 micro Sv at the moment, 100-times higher than that of Tokyo. And coastal areas of the city were in horrible situation as though they might have been struck at ferociously by air bombers. [1]

“Nuclear disaster is ongoing. The very existence of nuclear power is a threat to the survival of humanity not only in this region but also in the world.”

Once a nuclear disaster occurs, it will take about half a century or more for people to rebuild or reconstruct their lives while being frightened by radiation exposure under de facto decommissioning of nuclear reactors. And many workers will be compelled to suffer serious health deterioration for many years. Despite this situation, Fumio Kishida and the Nuclear Mafia began to call the “safety myth” again. Not only the Japanese government but also the governments of East Asia are reluctant to abolish nuclear plants. It is because of a strong link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons.

Hegemonic ambitions with nuclear armament

Having more nuclear power plants in the world could mean more nuclear weapons. And in the event of war, nuclear power plants will become nuclear weapons themselves.

In recent years, Japan and its neighboring countries have been promoting the nuclear power generation under the pretext of “stable energy supply” and “economic efficiency”. Nuclear power and nuclear weapons share several common features. In fact, Japan and its neighboring countries have not even built a joint system against another nuclear disaster after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. It is because sharing information on nuclear power generation could mean sharing related information on nuclear weapons.

Asia is the main region in the world where especially nuclear power generation are growing significantly. And most of the world’s biggest nuclear power plants are in East Asia. Continuous operations of nuclear power plants in East Asian countries enable constant supply of fissile materials which is the key components of nuclear weapons. In East Asia, China ranks in third place worldwide in terms of its number of nuclear warheads. This year, North Korea had shifted from testing of nuclear weapons to training. And South Korea, which was defined as “principal enemy” by ethno-nationalist Kim Jong-un, began to take the highly unusual step toward independent nuclear armament. [2]

Nuclear disaster is ongoing. The very existence of nuclear power is a threat to the survival of humanity not only in this region but also in the world. Just after the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, tens of thousands of the population in Japan mobilized by anti-nuclear movements

suspended operation of nuclear power plants for a certain period of time. But as of this writing, total of seven nuclear power plants are in service in Japan. Twelve years have passed since the nuclear disaster. It is the time to move ahead for complete denuclearization and for a nuclear-free society again.

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Footnotes

[1] Kazuyoshi Sato, IVP, 19 April 2011, "[Forum social européen : trouver un second souffle](#)".

[2] Karen Yamanaka, IVP, 20 February 2023, "[Crise politique en Belgique : quand les gouvernants ne savent plus gouverner](#)"