

Fukushima, worst-case scenario, secrecy, Japan Nuke industry and corruption

Monday 20 February 2012, by [Associated Press](#), [Kyodo News](#), [Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 15 February 2012).

Japan official faults nuke design, defends secrecy

TOKYO (AP) — The government official who outlined Japan's worst-case scenario for the unfolding nuclear disaster last March defended how his study, warning that millions of people might have to flee, was kept secret.

Authorities would have had as much as a week or two to expand the evacuation zone if the worst-case scenario had started to unfold, said Shunsuke Kondo, who heads the Japan Atomic Energy Commission that helps set government nuclear policy.

But he also acknowledged Tuesday that the design for the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant had been faulty and he had not expected the "Chernobyl-style disaster" that occurred.

Kondo was commissioned by then-Prime Minister Naoto Kan to write the worst-case scenario on what might happen after the March 11 tsunami crippled the plant and caused three reactors to melt down.

But fearing widespread panic, officials kept secret the 15-page document he delivered March 25. It was obtained by The Associated Press last month.

The document said evacuation zones possibly would have to be expanded, including the Tokyo area with a population of 35 million people, if massive radiation began to leak from the plant, 230 kilometers (140 miles) from the capital.

Workers ultimately were able to bring the reactors under control.

But at the time, just two weeks after the disaster, it was unclear whether emergency measures would succeed, and an aftershock or another tsunami could have set off explosions and leaks at the crippled plant.

Kondo, 69, a former engineering professor at the prestigious University of Tokyo, said the government responded properly to his scenario, which he prefers be called "contingency," instead of "worst-case."

"Thinking of contingencies is Common Sense Crisis Management 101," said Kondo, while noting the secrecy decision was not his but politicians'.

"Implementing cost-effective measures was the proper response," he told The Associated Press at his office in a rare interview.

Nearly a year after the disaster, the probability of the nuclear crisis spiraling out of control was tiny, according to Kondo, a stately looking man with white hair and sharp eyes.

The only task left undone from his scenario is relatively minor — covering the pools of spent nuclear fuel rods sitting next to each reactor at Fukushima Dai-ichi, he said.

Spent fuel rods are still highly radioactive. Hydrogen explosions blew apart two of six containment buildings at Fukushima.

Kondo's scenario had warned the radiation equivalent of two reactor cores might leak if the spent fuel started to burn.

Now, the rods are immersed in water and are stable.

Kondo, a longtime advocate of atomic technology as clean energy, acknowledged the design of Fukushima Dai-ichi had been faulty.

It failed in crucial "venting," to release pressure and prevent explosions, spreading radiation into the environment in what Kondo likened to the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Kondo had erroneously expected problems at a Japan plant to be like the Three Mile Island accident, where radiation leakage was limited.

"That was our biggest mistake," he said.

Decades will now be needed before Fukushima Dai-ichi can be fully decommissioned.

Authorities evacuated 59,000 residents within 20 kilometers (12 miles) of the Fukushima plant. Thousands more left other towns later.

Kondo still has sleepless nights.

"I can't sleep when I think of all those people who had to evacuate, all those mothers worried for their children," he said.

Associated Press, February 15, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/15/20120215p2g00m0dm015000c.html>

'Worst scenario' on Fukushima crisis shared only by a few lawmakers

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Nuclear disaster minister Goshi Hosono has said "the worst scenario" on development of the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima complex, which was compiled two weeks after the crisis began, was shared only by a few lawmakers, including then Prime Minister Naoto Kan, due to fears it might cause confusion among the public.

"The scenario was not a possibility in fact. If it had been made public at that time, it was likely that no one would have remained in Tokyo," Hosono told Kyodo News in a recent interview. "It would have caused trouble regarding the government's handling of the nuclear crisis."

The government predicted in the worst scenario, produced on March 25 by Japan Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Shunsuke Kondo, that the No. 1 reactor at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant would explode and the No. 4 unit's spent fuel pool would dry up, bringing about a more extensive

release of radioactive material.

The scenario was examined by only a few key lawmakers in the government and was not shared even with the Nuclear Safety Commission “as we wanted to prevent gossip from spreading,” Hosono said. “We could not even announce the fact that we compiled such a simulation.”

Hosono, who was serving as a special adviser to Kan, recommended to the premier “to be prepared for the worst possible scenario, just in case” about 10 days after the nuclear crisis began following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, as the Fukushima complex retained a “certain stability,” according to Hosono.

Kan then ordered Kondo to compile the scenario.

While several government officials said the scenario was initially considered “a private document,” Hosono countered by saying, “Documents compiled by us in an official capacity cannot be considered private. We were ready to disclose it (the scenario) if we received a freedom-of-information request.”

The scenario, meanwhile, prompted the government to brace for unforeseen trouble, Hosono said. For example, the government introduced nine concrete pumping vehicles at the No. 4 reactor so it would not dry up while enhancing the reactor pool, he added.

“It was not wrong to prepare for the worst cases, based on the scenario,” he said.

Kyodo Press, January 30, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/01/30/20120130p2g00m0dm012000c.html>

Gov't kept Fukushima crisis worst-case scenario under wraps for months

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The government kept a worst case scenario for the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant under wraps for months after the document was shown to a small group of policymakers in late March, government sources said Saturday.

A private-sector panel looking into the nuclear disaster plans to probe whether the government tried to manipulate information in handling the crisis, by interviewing then Prime Minister Naoto Kan and Goshi Hosono, environment minister who was then adviser to Kan, among other figures. Hosono was in charge of handling the nuclear crisis.

The document, created by Japan Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Shunsuke Kondo at Kan's request, said that in a worst case scenario, radioactive materials would intermittently be released in massive quantities for roughly a year if all workers had to be evacuated from the plant, some 220 kilometers northeast of Tokyo.

After being shown to a small group of senior government officials at Kan's executive office in late March, the document was treated as if it never existed, the sources said, adding that it was not until the end of last year that the document was recognized as an official one.

The document was dated March 25, 2011, two weeks after the massive earthquake and tsunami

triggered the country's worst nuclear crisis. It was premised on a scenario in which all plant workers had to be evacuated due to a rise in radiation levels after a hydrogen explosion damaged a containment vessel encasing the plant's No. 1 reactor.

The document said that should such a case occur, residents within a radius of 170 kilometers or more of the plant would be forced to move out, while those within a radius of 250 km of the plant, including Tokyo, would be allowed to leave if they wish.

"It contained such shocking content that we decided to treat it as if it never existed," a senior government official said.

Another government source said, "When the document was presented, there was a discussion about the choice of keeping the existence of the document itself secret."

Kan admitted the existence of a worst case scenario in September, while the government of his successor, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, decided to treat the document as a Cabinet Office document after some parts of it were reported in December.

The atomic energy commission is set up in the Cabinet Office.

At a news conference on Jan. 6, Hosono said, "Because we were told there would be enough time for evacuations (even if things went according to the worst-case scenario), we refrained from disclosing the document for fear its disclosure would cause unnecessary anxieties.

Kyodo Press, January 22, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/01/22/20120122p2g00m0dm066000c.html>

Gov't withheld estimates showing electricity surplus to boost nuclear power: critics

The government withheld an estimate that there would be no electricity shortages in the upcoming summer in an apparent bid to underscore the need to restart nuclear power plants, it has been learned.

Instead of announcing the realistic estimate, the government announced last summer that electric power supply in the summer of 2012 "will be about 10 percent short across the country." Furthermore, the released government estimate greatly downplayed the supply of renewable energy, disregarding the country's actual energy status.

"The released government estimate stresses the need to resume operations of nuclear power plants by underestimating the actual supply capacity," a concerned source has told the Mainichi.

Currently, 49 out of 54 commercial nuclear reactors in Japan are under suspension, with five other reactors anticipating regular inspections. By this summer, the country will have no nuclear reactors in operation unless some of them are restarted.

The government's Energy and Environment Council compiled the published estimate in July last year as the council was reviewing the country's energy strategy in the aftermath of the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, which began in March last year. The council calculated

that power supply will be 9.2 percent short at the peak of demand on the assumption that the summer of 2012 will be as hot as the summer of 2010, when temperatures hit record highs, and that all nuclear plants will have been suspended by that time.

Aside from the estimate, then Prime Minister Naoto Kan instructed a team assisting him in the National Policy Unit in late June last year to study the actual status of electric power and supply. The team asked the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry to submit data supporting the government's estimate, including the installed capacity and operating capacity at each power station and the operational status of renewable energy sources by region, and had the ministry recalculate the estimate.

As a result, it was found that electric power companies were capable of procuring 7.59 million kilowatts through renewable energy under the current law — equal to the output of about seven nuclear reactors. However, the released government estimate stated that utilities were unable to provide renewable energy supplies.

In addition, the released estimate apparently deliberately presumed that some of the thermal power plants would be suspended in August — a peak-demand period — for regular inspections and also anticipated that there would be no cut in power use at the time of a power crunch through the supply-demand adjustment arrangement with major electricity contractors. The estimate also played down the supply capacity of pumped-storage hydroelectricity, which utilizes night-time surplus power during the daytime.

The recalculation found that the country would have a surplus power supply of up to 6 percent even without a government order for power restrictions if renewable energy supply and other elements were factored in. The recalculated data was compiled in August last year and was reported to Prime Minister Kan, but it was never released to the public.

Satoshi Kusakabe, councilor to the Cabinet Secretariat, who is in charge of the Energy and Environment Council, denied that the government withheld the estimate in order to underscore the need to reactivate suspended nuclear reactors.

"In the nation's decision-making process, we wouldn't be able to later say that we were actually short of power, so we carefully compiled an estimate that had solid figures," he said. "We had no intention of propagating possible supply shortages and cited an increase of renewable energy and thermal power supply as necessary efforts in a countermeasure released in November last year."

Hisashi Kajiyama, research fellow at the Fujitsu Research Institute, who was a member of the team assisting Kan and took part in the recalculation of the estimate, said the initial estimate was biased. "The (released) estimate is based on the extreme presumption that was drawn from claims by utilities. The figures in the estimate led to politicians' remarks approving the restarting of nuclear plants. I assume the Kan administration couldn't release the recalculation because of the chaos in the final days of his administration."

Mainichi Shimbun, January 23, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/01/23/20120123p2a00m0na007000c.html>

Professor who promoted lenient standards for nuclear containers received donations

A Tokyo Institute of Technology professor received a large amount of donations from engineering firm OCL Corp. before he promoted lenient inspection standards for spent nuclear fuel casks that the company produced, the Mainichi has learned.

Professor Masanori Aritomi was the driving force behind the standards, which favored OCL Corp. The Atomic Energy Society of Japan (AESJ) adopted the standards for inspections of transportation casks.

The finding highlights campaigns by proponents of the so-called “nuclear village” establishment to adopt such lax standards — rather than the national standards — to their advantage.

According to minutes of the AESJ’s deliberations and people familiar with the issue, the AESJ decided on the inspection standards, also known as “AESJ standards,” to apply to the safe design and inspections of transportation casks for spent fuel, new mixed oxide fuel and high-level radioactive waste. After soliciting opinions from the public, the government will formally set new standards this year.

The AESJ normally comes up with its own atomic energy-related standards after a sectional committee writes a draft that is then checked by experts and standards committees. The society’s panel on nuclear fuel transportation casks began deliberations in 2010. The deliberations were held at OCL’s conference room and the draft was drawn up by a member of the panel from OCL.

Aritomi served as head of the panel on transportation casks and its umbrella organization, the nuclear fuel cycle department. He also took on the position of deputy chairman of the decision-making standards committee.

Tokyo Institute of Technology records show that Aritomi received a total of 14.85 million yen in scholarship donations from OCL between fiscal 2006 and 2010. Another researcher, a Tokyo Institute of Technology associate professor and a member of the sectional committee, received a 1 million yen scholarship donation in fiscal 2010.

The deliberations focused on whether heat transfer inspections to check how heat stemming from spent nuclear fuel would be transmitted to casks should be conducted on all new casks. The AESJ draft says sample inspections are acceptable so long as cask manufacturers have a good track record, but the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) is demanding inspections of all transportation casks. During a meeting of experts in June last year, a safety examiner from NISA expressed the agency’s opposition to sample inspections.

In spite of the opposition, however, the lenient inspection standards were approved by an overwhelming majority through balloting by members of the standards committee between Dec. 23 last year and Jan. 19 this year, with only a member from NISA dissenting. A member from the Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organization abstained.

According to experts familiar with transportation casks, a large transportation cask can store as many as 38 spent nuclear fuel rods. Heat transfer inspections impose a heavy financial burden on the manufacturers because the number of electric heaters they have to install has to match the number of spent nuclear fuel rods.

Aritomi told the Mainichi he has no intention of deliberately siding with OCL.

“If all transportation casks are checked, shipments will slow down and the processing of spent fuel

will not progress," he said. "We, the AESJ, determined that sample inspections were OK."

However, when asked about his involvement in the entire decision-making process, he said, "It cannot be helped if suspicion is raised over my neutrality. I think I should resign at least as the head of the sectional committee or deputy chairman of the standards committee."

Nevertheless, Aritomi also argued: "Unlike nuclear reactors, the transportation cask is not something which you can write a thesis about, and there are not many researchers. I realized there were many problems with the deliberation structure, but there were few people who could get involved."

OCL Managing Director Kazuo Kawakami dismissed any suspicions arising over the issue, saying, "The committee is operating in accordance with the principles of fairness, justice and openness, and does not cause any suspicion."

A NISA official commented, "Transportation casks should be subject to tough standards because they are transported near citizens. We cannot adopt the (AESJ) standards as government standards."

Aritomi was appointed as an adviser to the Cabinet Secretariat by then Prime Minister Naoto Kan shortly after the outbreak of the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant.

Mainichi Shimbun, February 13, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/13/20120213p2a00m0na018000c.html>

Pro-nuclear energy town councillor's firm had 700 million yen in nuke plant contracts

TAKAHAMA, Fukui — A town assembly member here calling for the continuation of nuclear power is also president of a company that has received at least 700 million yen in nuclear-related construction contracts, it has been learned.

Akio Awano, 62, is vice-speaker of the municipal assembly of Takahama, which hosts a Kansai Electric Power Co. nuclear plant. He is also part of a local organization promoting nuclear power plants.

According to the Fukui Prefectural Government and other sources, Awano's firm, a metal processing company, has around 15 employees and earned about 200 million yen in fiscal 2010. It has an office in the Takahama nuclear plant and has expanded its business on a diet of nuclear plant-related construction.

Construction records show that Kansai Electric began contracting Awano's firm directly in the 1990s, and has forked out some 536 million yen to the company for 67 jobs in the past five years. Furthermore, Awano's company took 66 subcontracted jobs at the utility over the same period. Most local construction businesses get at most about 15 power company jobs per year.

In September of last year, Awano submitted a written statement seeking continuation of nuclear power generation, including the restart of Takahama plant reactors off-line for regular inspections. The statement was approved by an overwhelming majority of the town assembly.

However, Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa has said, “Unless the national government submits new safety standards reflecting the knowledge gained from the Fukushima nuclear disaster, I cannot agree” to a restart of the reactors. Oi and Mihama, two other towns in Fukui Prefecture also hosting nuclear facilities, have not passed resolutions in favor of restarting reactors.

Awano has defended himself by saying, “I submitted the statement after looking at the country’s energy situation and judging that nuclear power is necessary. My actions as an assembly member and my management of the company are completely separate, and I was not influenced by the construction contracts.”

The No. 1, 2, and 4 reactors at the Takahama plant are off-line for inspections. In January Kansai Electric submitted a safety evaluation of the No. 1 reactor to the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, a prerequisite for it to be restarted. The agency and the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan will look at the evaluation and Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda will make a decision on the restart based on local opinions.

Kansai Electric has declined to comment on individual contracts, saying only that its business partners are “evaluated and registered in a fair manner, with the most appropriate company for a construction job chosen and contracted.”

Mainichi Shimbun, February 7, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/07/20120207p2a00m0na023000c.html>

Gov’t cover-up of nuke fuel disposal cost sparks rage

Both concerned officials and opposition party members are fuming after revelations that the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) systematically covered up estimates showing direct disposal of spent nuclear fuel would be cheaper than the government’s much-vaunted nuclear fuel cycle program.

Under Japan’s nuclear fuel cycle policy, spent fuel from conventional reactors would be reprocessed into MOX fuel — a mix of plutonium and uranium oxides — for use in special “full MOX” reactors that use only MOX fuel, and “pluthermal” reactors burning both MOX and conventional fuel.

Members of a government council that in 2004 debated keeping the country’s nuclear fuel cycle policy going versus shifting to direct disposal of spent nuclear fuel were enraged over the recent revelations. Social Democratic Party leader Mizuho Fukushima is also set to assail the government over the issue in the Diet, demanding a second investigation as well as the replacement of the man who ordered the cover-up, METI’s Deputy Director-General for Nuclear Safety Regulation Reform Masaya Yasui.

The Electricity Industry Committee of the ministry’s Advisory Committee for Natural Resources and Energy had been discussing the nuclear fuel cycle policy under the assumption that no estimate existed for the cost of directly disposing of spent nuclear fuel. The committee decided in June 2004 to pour some 19 trillion yen in taxpayers’ money into the Rokkasho Reprocessing Plant in Aomori Prefecture, designed to extract plutonium and uranium from spent nuclear fuel. Progress on the Rokkasho plant has been delayed by a number of problems, including a recent malfunction that set

back a planned test run of the facility.

Tatsuo Hatta, visiting research fellow at Osaka University and former member of the Electricity Industry Committee, told the Mainichi, "I'd thought it was strange (that no estimate for direct disposal existed), but there was a real push for the nuclear fuel cycle in the air." "The issue should be reinvestigated, and Mr. Yasui should at least be removed from the position of director-general for nuclear safety regulation reform," Hatta said.

Takehiko Oguma, an official of the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU), who was in charge of sending JCCU members to the Electricity Industry Committee, said, "The ministry may have deliberately concealed the estimate that direct disposal would be cheaper (than the nuclear fuel cycle) because it could have hindered the introduction of a system that would cost the public purse 19 trillion yen. METI should be held accountable. Unless they take responsibility, similar problems could arise."

Mainichi Shimbun, February 6, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/06/20120206p2a00m0na017000c.html>

Gov't probe into cover-up of nuclear fuel disposal costs finished without full questioning

A government probe into the 2004 concealment of estimates on the cost of disposing of spent nuclear fuel has come under scrutiny after two of the 25 people held to have been questioned over the cover-up disclosed they were actually punished without any questioning.

Masaya Yasui, the deputy director general for nuclear safety regulation reform in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), was found in 2004 to have ordered the concealment of estimates on the cost of disposing of spent nuclear fuel directly without recycling it. During an internal investigation into the cover-up, 25 people were targeted for questioning. However, two of the 25 disclosed to the Mainichi that they were punished without being questioned.

The finding has raised suspicions that officials conducted a sloppy investigation in an attempt to quickly close the curtains on the incident. The ministry does not plan to reopen an investigation, stating: "A thorough investigation has already been conducted."

The incident arose after Social Democratic Party leader Mizuho Fukushima asked the House of Councillors Budget Committee in March 2004, "What is the cost when not reprocessing (spent nuclear fuel)?" and Kazumasa Kusaka, then an official at METI's Agency for Natural Resources and Energy, responded, "There are no cost estimates."

However, in July that year, several media organizations carried reports on the existence of estimates showing that disposing of spent nuclear fuel directly was cheaper than reprocessing it. This prompted the ministry to conduct an internal investigation in which 25 workers were subject to questioning. By August, METI had dished out strict warnings and other punishments to 13 people, including Yasui.

At the time, the ministry explained that Yasui and the other officials had been unaware of the existence of the estimates until they were interviewed by the media in July that year. It said there had been no instances of a subordinate reporting estimates that were then concealed, and that

members had not acted maliciously.

However, in coverage by The Mainichi Shimbun, it emerged that Yasui had received a report from a subordinate on the existence of estimates in April that year and told the subordinate, "Put it somewhere out of sight."

One of the 25 people targeted in the subsequent internal investigation told the Mainichi, "I was camping in the Nasu Highland region (in Tochigi Prefecture) when my mobile phone rang. I was called back (to Tokyo) and punished. I wasn't questioned."

Another one of the 25 said, "I was overseas when the incident was uncovered. I was punished as soon as I arrived home. I have no recollection of being questioned."

One other worker who was questioned said, "I was questioned once in mid-July, for about 30 minutes. The questions were simple, like, 'Did you know about the existence of the estimates?' and it didn't seem like they were actually trying to ascertain the truth of the matter."

Speaking at a news conference at the time, then Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Shoichi Nakagawa said, "We talked to a lot of people, spending an hour or more with each person (in questioning)." In a news conference on Jan. 6 this year, the current Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Yukio Edano, commented, "A thorough investigation and punishment have been carried out."

Mainichi Shimbun, February 6, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/06/20120206p2a00m0na016000c.html>

11 universities received nuclear energy research funds from gov't, industry

Eleven top universities, such as the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University, accepted a total of some 10.4 billion yen in nuclear technology research funds from the government and industry between fiscal 2006 and 2010, the Mainichi Shimbun has learned.

Some of the institutions even accepted hundreds of millions of yen a year. These universities have been effectively guaranteed stable amounts of research funds as long as they cooperate in the promotion of nuclear power, demonstrating that such high education institutions have been incorporated into the national policy.

The Mainichi Shimbun compiled the figures based on documents that it accessed under the Act on Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs.

Of at least 10.487 billion yen in total funding, the institutions accepted 9.3 billion yen from the government and companies in the nuclear energy industry as fees to conduct research on their behalf.

For example, the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry paid over 514 million yen to Fukui University in fiscal 2010 for research and development of key technology aimed at placing a fast-breeder nuclear reactor into practical use.

The institutions took a combined 410.83 million yen for joint research projects with private companies and other organizations. Companies typically foot up to several millions of yen for each project.

Researchers at these universities received a total of 218.22 million yen in donations from businesses for their research activities, most of which the recipients were allowed to freely use.

Masanori Aritomi, professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, received 18.85 million yen in donations, the largest amount of an individual researcher.

"I have a chronic disease and can't use an economy class seat when I travel abroad to attend research sessions, and need a larger amount of funds to cover my travel expenses. I guess the donors took that into consideration," he said.

Regarding fears that donations from companies could distort the results of his research, Aritomi said, "I take care to prevent such a problem. I specialize in research and development rather than safety assessment. So I don't think there's any problem."

Shortly after the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear crisis in March 2011, then Prime Minister Naoto Kan appointed Aritomi as an adviser to the Cabinet Secretariat.

The government and the industry did not provide any funds to Kyoto University assistant professors Hiroaki Koide and Tetsuji Imanaka, who have constantly warned of risks involving nuclear power stations.

Four of the 11 universities held lectures on nuclear energy funded by businesses. Electric power suppliers and other firms donated a combined 491 million yen to these institutions to hold such lectures.

By university, Kyoto University received the largest amount of funds from the government and private businesses at about 3.36 billion yen, followed by the University of Tokyo with nearly 2.559 billion yen and the Tokyo Institute of Technology with some 1.67 billion yen.

Mainichi Shimbun, January 23, 2012
(Mainichi Japan) January 23, 2012

Nuclear researchers receiving questionable donations from industry, gov't

Revelations that the government and the nuclear energy industry have donated 10.4 billion yen in total to 11 universities have highlighted the heavy reliance of such high education institutions on outside funds for their research into nuclear energy.

In most cases, the universities, including the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University, received the funds under contracts to conduct research on nuclear technology.

In particular, the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry has provided massive amounts of funds to the universities.

Specifically, the ministry provided 217.81 million yen to the University of Tokyo to conduct research

and development of fast reactors in fiscal 2009, while giving 212.44 million yen to Kyoto University for research on the development of so-called super-oxide dispersion strengthened (ODS) ferritic steel to rationalize nuclear power systems. The periods of some of the projects funded by the ministry were extended over several years.

In the meantime, nuclear energy-related companies typically paid the universities hundreds of thousands of yen to millions of yen per project to commission them to conduct research.

Massive amounts of taxpayers' money that the government allocates for nuclear power-related research and development projects under its policy of promoting nuclear power has supported universities' research activities.

Many of these universities were also engaged in joint research projects with the semi-governmental Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) and the Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry, illustrating the universities' close ties with the industry as well as government bodies.

Furthermore, companies have extended hundreds of thousands of yen to some 1 million yen each to individual researchers. Even though such donations are managed by the universities, individual recipients can freely use the money in most cases.

Tokyo Institute of Technology professor Masanori Aritomi accepted a total of 18.85 million yen in donations from OCL Corp. and other companies over a five-year period. He said he spent the money to finance his travel expenses to attend academic society research sessions, personnel expenses for employing seven researchers and financial assistance to students to cover their tuition fees.

"Unlike joint research funds or contracted research funds, you can carry over surplus money from such donations to the next academic year, which enables you to pay wages and financial assistance to students without interruption," he said.

A researcher who previously worked at the Tokyo Institute of Technology said, "Evaluations of researchers depends on how many papers they write a year. To write quality papers, you must spend much money to conduct experiments."

University of Tokyo professor Haruki Madarame accepted a combined 4 million yen in donations from nuclear reactor manufacturer Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. (MHI) over a four-year period from fiscal 2006 to 2009 — before he was appointed as chairman of the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan (NSC).

The Kansai Genshiryoku Kondankai (Kansai Council on Nuclear Power) extended the largest amount of donations, 51.55 million yen, to researchers, mainly those at universities in the Kansai region including Kyoto University.

The council introduced an open application system in fiscal 2009. Specifically, the council screens research plans submitted by applicants and provides 500,000 yen for each selected research project a year. Council officials declined to identify the companies that have provided funds.

MHI has extended the second largest amount of donations, 29.57 million yen, to researchers.

When asked about the reason for extending such a large volume of contributions to researchers, MHI's public relations division explained, "The results of research conducted by the recipients of our donations can lead to technological developments for us, and eventually to the technological innovation of the nation's nuclear power industry as a whole."

However, it is only nuclear researchers in favor of the promotion of nuclear power that can receive research funds from the national government and nuclear energy-related firms.

Hiroaki Koide and Tetsuji Imanaka, assistant professors at the Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute who are staunch opponents of nuclear power, received no research funds from the government and nuclear energy-related companies between fiscal 2006 and 2010. Some 420,000 yen that Imanaka received in fiscal 2010 to conduct research on radiation exposure from the “black rain” fallout from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima was the only research funds he received from an outside source.

The revelations have also highlighted problems involving universities’ transparency of information.

The *Mainichi Shimbun* compiled the figures based on documents it accessed under the Act on Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs. However, the level of information the universities released varied from institution to institution.

In particular, Kyushu University declined to disclose any of its information on contracted research projects, the amounts of funds it received from the government or companies for joint research projects and the identities of individual researchers who received donations for research.

Osaka University also blacked out the names of partners and research themes of joint and contracted research projects worth approximately 281 million yen.

Tohoku University failed to respond to a request that the *Mainichi* filed in October for the disclosure of relevant information.

Mainichi Shimbun, January 23, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/01/23/20120123p2a00m0na004000c.html>

Electric power industry extended donations to major political parties

The electric power industry has contributed funds to major political parties, with management extending donations to the largest opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and labor unions providing funds to the ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).

Executives of nine utilities that own nuclear power stations and their subsidiaries are believed to have extended approximately 80 million yen to the LDP in 2009 and 2010 as individuals. Twenty-one organizations — labor unions at power suppliers and their affiliated political organizations — provided at least 68.76 million yen to the DPJ’s branches and individual legislators belonging to the party over the same period.

The nine electric power companies have refrained from extending political donations as entities since 1974 on the grounds that companies involved in the public utility business should not act in such a manner.

At the same time, however, they have bought tickets to political fund-raising parties for legislators, mostly those with the LDP. Furthermore, board members at these utilities, other high-ranking officials, retirees and executives at their subsidiaries have contributed funds to Kokumin Seiji

Kyokai, the LDP's fund-raising organization, as individuals.

These individuals are believed to have extended about 45 million yen in 2009 and some 35 million yen in 2010. The Mainichi compiled the figures by tracking donations extended by individuals whose names are identical to those carried on utilities' name lists from Kokumin Seiji Kyokai's political fund reports.

Even though the lists may include different people with the same names as utility executives, all of them extended their financial contributions to the LDP's fund-raising body in December, suggesting that the donations were coordinated by the industry.

All nine utilities denied their involvement in the donations as entities with one of them saying, "Executives extended the donations at their own discretion."

An LDP insider admitted its fund-raising body asked the donors to remit the donations into its bank account. However, the insider added that not all executives at these utilities complied with its request for donations.

In 2010, Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) Chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata and then President Masataka Shimizu donated 300,000 yen each to Kokumin Seiji Kyokai. Names identical to those of all 21 full-time TEPCO board members, excluding outside board members and outside auditors, were listed in the Kokumin Seiji Kyokai's political fund report for that year as donors.

Moreover, TEPCO operating officers apparently donated 50,000 yen each to the organization, TEPCO department managers and board members of its subsidiaries contributed 30,000 yen each and some deputy managers at the utility and branch managers also provided 10,000 yen.

More than 300 individuals whose names are identical to those listed as employees of TEPCO and its subsidiaries extended a total of some 10 million yen to Kokumin Seiji Kyokai.

Those with Chubu Electric Power Co. and Shikoku Electric Power Co. are also believed to have provided about 5 million yen and 4 million yen to the LDP's fund-raising body as political donations, respectively.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Electric Power Related Industry Workers' Unions of Japan (Denryoku Roren), member unions and their affiliated political organizations have also extended tens of millions of yen in political donations to individual DPJ legislators and the party's branches.

The labor organizations donated at least 35.91 million yen to DPJ legislators and branches in 2009 and 32.85 million yen the following year. Over the two-year period, at least 30 DPJ lawmakers received funds from these utility labor bodies.

The political wing of Denryoku Soren contributed 26.5 million yen to support the election campaign of Masao Kobayashi, a DPJ member of the House of Councillors and a former high-ranking official of the federation, in 2010. Thirteen Denryoku Soren-affiliated bodies also purchased 1.66 million yen worth of tickets to a political fund-raising party for Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Tatsuo Kawabata, who previously chaired the DPJ's panel on nuclear power policy, in 2010. Kawabata's office admitted that it asked the labor bodies for donations because the legislator has maintained close relations with them for many years.

The political wing of the union of workers at Chubu Electric Power Co. bought 260,000 yen worth of tickets each to political fund-raising parties for Deputy Prime Minister Katsuya Okada in 2009 and 2010.

Atsushi Uchida, general secretary of Denryoku Soren, denied that it attempted to curry favor with DPJ politicians by extending donations to them.

"You can't influence any government policy simply by buying tens of thousands of yen worth of fund-raising party tickets. (After requests from legislators) we extended reasonable amounts of donations," he said.

Mainichi Shimbun, January 24, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/01/24/20120124p2a00m0na005000c.html>
