

安倍廢無核政策 擬造新核電廠

(中央社記者楊明珠東京特稿) 日本首相安倍晉三日前在美國華府與美國總統歐巴馬舉行高峰會談時表示，之前野田政府主張在 2030 年之前擺脫依賴核電，但他要重新研議。安倍去年底就表示，要打造新型核電廠。

安倍去年 12 月 26 日上台後不久，就在電視節目上表示，盼興建新核電廠，這將有別於 311 東日本大震災後發生核災、於 40 年前建造的福島第 1 核電廠。

去年 9 月 14 日，野田政府的「能源及環境會議」公布「革新的能源及環境戰略」，主張目標設定為「2030 年零核電廠」，但在 2030 年前要節能 19%、省電 10%、再生能源的發電量達到 3000 億千瓦 (占總供給量的 30%)。這種高標準，立刻遭到電力業界、產業界反彈。

美國前副國務卿阿米塔吉 (Richard Armitage) 也反對，認為日本須維持經濟大國的地位和貢獻集體安全保障，不應自我放棄核電、自綁手腳。

先前的野田政府雖提出 2030 年零核電廠政策，明定核電廠運作最高年限 40 年，但後來卻又承認中斷興建的大間核電廠、島根核電廠 3 號機持續興建，凸顯決策矛盾。有專家批評，野田政府沒考慮到，能源戰略是國家戰略，攸關國家安全保障。

有別於北歐國家形成共同電力市場的情況，日本是未與外國連結的「電力孤島」，輸電網路脆弱、東西區域周波數也不同。有專家指出，如果要在核能與再生能源當中二選一的話，是無法獲得能源安全保障的。

東京電力公司福島第 1 核電廠發生核災後，日本核電廠「安全神話」破滅，核災導致 16 萬人被迫遷移，但是電力不足導致經濟停滯、企業出走海外。另外，引進再生能源或增加依賴石化燃料等導致電費飆漲，影響民生。

2012 年夏天日本酷暑日多，只靠大飯核電廠 2 座核反應爐運作苦撐。有民眾認為沒核電也可撐過，但因為核電廠無法啟動，靠進口液化瓦斯等火力發電廠的燃料費比 311 震災前增加了 3 兆日圓 (約新台幣 1 兆元)。

去年 9 月，日本廢除原子力安全委員會、保安院，成立原子力規制委員會，今年 1 月提示有關核電廠耐震及安全的新安全標準架構案。7 月新安全標準將實施。

原子力規制委員會委員長 1 月 9 日在記者會表示，安倍政府計畫 3 年內判斷日本境內所有核電廠 (50 座核反應爐) 是否重新啟動，不過他也認為，3 年內很難審查完畢。

日本「朝日新聞」24 日報導，調查顯示，東京電力公司的福島第 1 核電廠之外的日本境內 16 座核電廠當中，沒有 1 座符合新安全標準架構案。1020226

日重新擁核？ 安倍擬建新核電廠

【編譯林翠儀／綜合報導】日本首相安倍晉三三十日接受電視專訪時表示，如果獲得民眾「理解」，他有意興建不同於福島核一廠的新型核電設施。這是安倍上台後首度表示有意興建新核電廠，因此這項發言備受各方關注。

日本眾議院大選時，「反核」是各政黨攻防的主要政見之一，而自民黨在能源政策上僅表示，將以三年時間評估核電政策，十年內確定最佳的能源構成比例，態度頗為曖昧。不過，外國媒體大都認為自民黨仍是屬於「擁核」的政黨，安倍也不止一次在公開場合抨擊「零核電」政策「不切實際、不負責任」。

放棄零核電後 最新表態

安倍二十九日視察福島核一廠後已表示，將不會延續民主黨政府「在二○三○年代達成零核電」的能源政策。三十日他更進一步表達有意興建新核電廠，並強調若要新建核電廠，將是有別於四十年前的舊型、與福島核一廠不同的核電設施，但他並未進一步說明箇中差異，以及是否對凍結中的新建案予以解凍。

事實上，自民黨長期執政，大力發展核能政策，在福島核災發生前，全日本有超過五十座核反應爐，興建中或計畫興建的反應爐也高達十四座。三一一震災後，除福島核一廠七、八號機確定停建外，其他十二座機組均遭凍結。

茂木：重啟安全核電廠

安倍二十六日被選為新任首相，並任命茂木敏充擔任經濟產業大臣，負責監督核能產業。茂木二十八日表示，將檢討民主黨政府主張二○三○年代全面廢核的目標。「只要確認安全無虞」，他將同意重啟核電廠，茂木強調：「我們將會重啟被新的核能監管機關評估為安全的核能電廠。」但在新的核能安全標準制定前，「我們不會讓核能電廠恢復運作」。「我們並不是要推翻前政府所做的每一項決定，但我們將會審視有必要重新思考的議題。」

儘管福島核災後的日本反核情緒高漲，有民調顯示有八成日本人支持逐步廢核，但主張反核的政黨並未獲得選票支持，自民黨的強勢回歸，打破了「第三勢力」在選戰期間營造的反核聲勢。日本共同社指出，這次眾議院大選是三一一震災以來首

次真正的大選，但各黨並未就以核電政策為首的重建對策進行深入探討，結果選民選擇了在能源政策上與「零核電」距離最遠的自民黨。



The Communications Network for Nuclear Energy and Ionising Radiation

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Japan's New PM Says Government 'Will Endorse' New Nuclear Plants

Policies & Politics

3 Jan (NucNet): Japan's new Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) prime minister Shinzo Abe has said for the first time that his government will endorse the construction of new nuclear power plants.

Mr Abe said in a statement that he would take "a level-headed look" at what caused the March 2011 nuclear crisis at Fukushima-Daiichi and would also look at other energy issues including the continued use of nuclear power.

He said: "Any new nuclear plant would be completely different from Fukushima-Daiichi, which was constructed more than 40 years ago. We will build new nuclear power plants and seek to win the people's understanding."

Mr Abe said he would look into the factors that led to "differing fates" for nuclear plants in Japan's northern Tohoku region following the earthquake and tsunami of 11 March 2011.

He noted that Tokyo Electric Power Company's (Tepco) six-unit Fukushima-Daiichi plant was unable to secure a power source after the tsunami hit, but Tohoku Electric Power Company's Onagawa nuclear plant in Miyagi Prefecture, to the north of Fukushima, withstood the situation well.

At Tepco's Fukushima-Daini, also in Fukushima Prefecture, all four reactor units shut down safely when the earthquake hit and the plant had none of the core melt problems that affected Fukushima-Daiichi.

A report by the International Atomic Energy Agency said the three-unit Onagawa nuclear power plant was "remarkably undamaged" despite "very high levels of ground shaking". Onagawa, facing the Pacific Ocean on Japan's northeast coast, was the nuclear station closest to the epicentre of the earthquake.

During the campaign for last month's House of Representatives elections Mr Abe said he would determine "the optimum power-generation makeup" for Japan within 10 years. Before taking office last month, he said he would review the Democratic Party of Japan-led government's policy of not allowing new nuclear plants to be built.

In his latest statement, Mr Abe said the Japanese people are worried about having sufficient electricity in the immediate future. He said parties that called for a shift away from nuclear energy were therefore "not trusted" in the recent election.

Mr Abe also said he intended to increase the role of renewable energy, saying state funds will be put towards the development of wind, solar and other renewable energy sources over the next three years.

In September 2012, as a consequence of the Fukushima-Daiichi accident, a government panel

announced a draft energy policy that included plans to stop using nuclear power by the 2030s.

Under the proposals, Japan's nuclear plants would have been shut down completely by the year 2040.

Before the Fukushima-Daiichi accident, Japan derived about 30 percent of its electricity from nuclear power, and its previous long-term energy strategy had called for the ratio to be increased to 50 percent by 2030.

The reactor maker Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has said the government should begin restarting Japan's reactors as soon as possible.

The company's chief executive officer, Hideaki Omiya, said Japan's energy policy plays a big part in the country's ability to grow economically.

In May 2012, the Tomari-3 nuclear unit shut down leaving Japan without any of its 50 commercial nuclear reactors in operation. Since then two reactors have restarted, Ohi-3 and Ohi-4.

Following the Fukushima-Daiichi accident, the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency ordered two-stage stress tests on all Japan's nuclear reactors.

Related reports in the NucNet database (available to subscribers): Japan Announces Plans To Phase Out Nuclear (News No.37, 14 September 2012)

Source NucNet
Editor David Dalton

Japan prepares for nuclear U-turn

January 3, 2013 1:43 pm

By Michiyo Nakamoto in Tokyo

Japan's plan for a nuclear-free society, which gathered momentum after the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima nearly two years ago, looks set to be shortlived.

Since its electoral landslide in December, the Liberal Democratic party has wasted no time in setting the stage for a return to Japan's former policy of promoting nuclear power as a major source of energy generation.

Shinzo Abe, who took over as prime minister last month, has given a clear indication that the government is looking to build new nuclear power plants, despite widespread public reservations in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima accident, the world's worst nuclear disaster in a quarter of a century.

"The new nuclear power plants we will build will be completely different from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant which caused the accident, and those that were built 40 years ago," Mr Abe said in a television appearance this week.

"We are likely to build new nuclear power plants on winning the public's understanding," he said.

Mr Abe's comments came after Toshimitsu Motegi, his economy, trade and industry minister, said he would re-evaluate the previous administration's ban on building new nuclear reactors.

The LDP's pro-nuclear stance is a reversal of the previous administration's commitment to phase out Japan's dependence on nuclear energy by 2040, made in response to public fears about the safety of nuclear power.

A survey conducted by the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper, just before the elections last month, showed that more than 60 per cent wanted to phase out nuclear energy completely.

In response to public concerns, the previous government halted all but two of the country's 50 nuclear reactors and ordered them to undergo stringent safety inspections before being restarted.

During December's lower-house elections, the LDP, which was the architect of Japan's nuclear policy, appeared to signal a reassessment of its previous pro-nuclear stance.

In its statement outlining its election pledges, the LDP conceded that its pro-nuclear energy policy had been flawed and apologised for causing the Fukushima nuclear accident.

The LDP, which had talked in the past about raising Japan's dependence on nuclear energy from nearly 30 per cent to as much as 50 per cent, pledged during the elections "to establish a social and economic structure that does not need to depend on nuclear power".

By promising to pour resources into promoting alternative energy development and to develop an optimal energy mix over the next decade "the LDP kept their position on nuclear energy ambiguous before the elections", says Norimichi Hattori of the Tokyo-based Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes.

But "since the Abe administration was formed, their rhetoric on nuclear power has changed quite rapidly", says Koichi Nakano, professor of political science at Sophia University in Tokyo.

"It now looks like the LDP feels it is their duty to promote nuclear energy," Mr Nakano says.

In the short term, Japan's new government may want to avoid taking concrete steps, such as restarting more reactors, which could prove controversial in the run-up to upper-house elections this July.

Winning a majority in the upper house, which is controlled by the opposition, is an important objective for Mr Abe, who is keen to realise his pet projects of educational and constitutional reform.

"There isn't much time before the upper-house elections, so they have to drive carefully," says Mr Hattori at the Coalition Against Nukes.

What is more, the Nuclear Regulation Authority, the industry watchdog, will not publish its new safety standards, which will be the basis for restarting reactors, until July.

A key test of the government's determination to revive nuclear energy use will come this spring when the NRA is scheduled to announce its verdict on whether or not the Oi nuclear power plant in northwestern Japan is sitting on an active faultline.

The Oi power plant houses the only two reactors currently operating in Japan.

While the NRA has said it will recommend that Oi be shut down if it determines that it is on an active faultline, the final decision will be a political one.

If the government allows nuclear plants to remain switched off, it would be admitting that nuclear power is not critical to economic recovery, says Mr Nakano, who believes there is a chance the Abe administration will give Oi the go-ahead regardless of the NRA's decision.

Given the LDP's close ties to the nuclear industry and its history of promoting nuclear power, the Abe administration cannot afford to have the public realise that Japan can get along just fine without nuclear power, Mr Nakano says.

"I think that is what they are most afraid of," he adds.

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Fossil imports burn Japanese trade again

25 January 2013

Japanese spending on imported fossil fuels soared in the latter part of last year, helping push the country to a trade deficit for the second year in a row. Emissions targets are under revision as most nuclear power plants remain closed.

A lack of domestic energy resources was a major economic and strategic factor in Japan's push to develop nuclear power through the 1970s and the same issue has returned to prominence with the prolonged nuclear shutdown. Only two of 50 large nuclear reactors are currently generating while the rest await a regulatory process that may - or may not - approve their restart.



Tokyo's Akihabara district, known as Electric City (Image: Guwashi999)

Making up a large part of replacement power is LNG, imports of which were 11% higher in 2012 compared to 2011. However, the increase in demand for the fuel came with a corresponding regional price increase that pushed the total spending on LNG up by 25% to ¥6.0 trillion (\$66 billion). This is about ¥2.5 trillion (\$27 billion) more than levels seen before the March 2011 accident at Fukushima Daiichi, which preceded the progressive shutdown of nuclear generation.

This is the second year in a row that Japan's LNG imports have increased significantly. In 2011 the country imported 12% more of the fuel than in 2010 at a total cost of ¥4.7 trillion (\$50 billion) - a spending increase of almost 38%. This jump came on top of a general trend of modest year-year increases in LNG use.

LNG now represents over 8% of all Japanese imports by value, with the only greater commodity being petroleum, which represents 17%. Overall in 2012 Japan recorded a trade deficit of ¥6.9 trillion (\$75 billion) after exports of ¥63.7 trillion (\$699 billion).

The government of prime minister Shinzo Abe has expressed general support for the resumption of nuclear power generation, given public understanding and independent oversight by the new Nuclear Regulatory Authority. However, that body will need until July to finalise its requirements for approving restarts and the likely scale of Japan's surviving nuclear generation sector remains unclear.

Given this uncertainty, ministers have openly dismissed the idea of keeping to climate change emissions reductions announced when an expansion of nuclear energy was planned. New environment minister Nobuteru Ishihara emerged from a cabinet meeting today to tell reporters, "We are not able to set precise figures yet, because the future of nuclear power hasn't been decided."

*Researched and written
by World Nuclear News*

Nuclear back on agenda after Japanese election

17 December 2012

The future of Japan's planned nuclear phaseout looks less certain following a landslide victory for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the first general election held since the country suspended most of its nuclear generation.

Winning 294 of the 480 seats in the Japanese lower house, LDP leader Shinzo Abe will form a government with LDP's coalition partner party, New Komeito, which won 31 seats. Yoshihiko Noda has announced that he will resign as leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) after the former governing party won only 57 seats.

Nuclear power has been one of the issues around which the 12 parties competing in the election have been campaigning. The economic struggles faced by Japan in recent years were compounded by the devastating effects of the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami of March 2011 which also triggered the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident. The country's recovery has been hampered by the loss of its nuclear generating capacity, the vast majority of which remains off line for extended safety assessments following the accident at Fukushima Daiichi.

A policy that would see Japan phase out nuclear energy completely by the 2030s was launched by Noda's government in September. However, the LDP was not supportive of the plans and prior to the elections Abe had branded plans to end the use of nuclear power "irresponsible."

Now the people of Japan - and the world - wait to see how Abe's government will shape energy policy. Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan (FEPC) chairman Makoto Yagi called on the newly-elected government to review and modify the plans announced in September 2012 to make them "more realistic". In a statement, he said that nuclear power should be included in a diverse energy portfolio, considering Japan's limited indigenous energy resources. With its nuclear plants offline Japan has relied on fossil fuels, which it must import, for power generation. This has also led to increases in its greenhouse gas emissions.

The markets were quick to respond to the election results. Shares in Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco) jumped 33%, while Kansai Electric Power, which operates the only nuclear units currently producing power in Japan, saw its shares rise 18%. Other Japanese nuclear utilities saw their share prices increase too, while the Nikkei index rose nearly 1% in response to the election results. The effects have also been felt outside Japan, with *The Australian* reporting rises of 8.4% and 5% respectively for uranium companies Paladin and Energy Resources of Australia.

*Researched and written
by World Nuclear News*



New Japanese government to reconsider zero-nuclear policy

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Japanese PM Shinzo Abe's cabinet is set to unveil the new energy policy early next month by dismantling plans to eliminate nuclear power in the country by 2040. The pro-business Liberal Democratic Party-led government also plans to restart reactors.

Thus Japan's new leaders intend to change plans of the previous cabinet regarding a post-Fukushima policy.

"We need to reconsider the previous administration's policy that aimed to make zero nuclear power operation possible during the 2030s," AFP quotes trade and industry minister Toshimitsu Motegi as saying. The minister is also in charge of supervising the nuclear industry.

However, Motegi also stressed he is ready to give the go-ahead to resuming generation at nuclear power plants "if they are confirmed safe," meaning shuttered power stations could start coming back online only upon authorization of the Nuclear Regulation Authority.

The authority was established in September 2012 to ensure nuclear safety in the country following last year's crisis at Fukushima, when meltdowns, which spewed radiation over a wide area of farmland, made hundreds of thousands of people homeless, as they had to be evacuated. It was triggered by a tsunami, which killed 19,000 people, and knocked out cooling systems.

On May 5, 2012 Japan turned off the country's last operating nuclear reactor located in the north of the country, finishing an extraordinary response of the Japanese government to the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, leaving the Land of the Rising Sun without electricity generated by nuclear reactors for the first time since 1966.

In order to patch the energy hole, Japan had to increase by one-third imports of natural gas and oil compared to the previous year. A month later – in June – previous PM Yoshihiko Noda ordered to restart of reactors at Ohi amid fears of a summer power shortage, but he vowed ahead of the election to phase out nuclear power by 2040.

Despite anti-nuclear public protests calling for nuclear power to be abandoned in Japan, following the Fukushima disaster, parties opposing atomic energy made little impact in December 16 elections, while Abe's LDP won a confident victory, returning to power after a three-year break, meaning people made a choice in favor of nuclear energy.

For resource-poor Japan, which relied on atomic power for around a third of its electricity, nuclear energy has been a national strategic priority since 1973, as the country invested billions of dollars into its nuclear power engineering. But for now Ohi Units 3 and 4 are Japan's only operating nuclear power plants.





Trade figures reveal cost of Japan's nuclear shutdown

25 January 2012

Huge energy imports last year caused Japan to record a rare trade deficit. Manufacturing was hit by the tsunami, but the use of fossil fuels to replace shut-down nuclear plants was a bigger factor.

Prior to the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami and subsequent major accident at Fukushima Daiichi, nuclear power had provided about 30% of Japan's electricity. But with nuclear reactors shutting down one by one over nine months of 2011, the current situation sees only 4 of 50 reactors in operation as government and regulators struggle to reassure the public that operation can safely recommence.

Japan has had to severely reduce its use of electricity with a big impact on domestic and industrial routines, while the utilities have switched to alternative fuels for power generation. The result has been a jump of 25.2% in fossil fuel imports, which last year made up almost one third of Japan's total overseas spending. Oil, gas and coal were all in demand from foreign markets.

In total during 2011 Japan spent ¥21.7 trillion (\$277 billion) on fossil fuel imports, up from ¥17.4 trillion (\$222 billion) the year before. This increase of ¥4.3 trillion (\$55 billion) is clearly a major factor in the country's overall trade deficit of ¥2.5 trillion (\$32 billion), the first posted by Japan since 1980.

Among power generation fuels it was liquified natural gas that saw the big increase to imports. Japan sourced 59% more LNG from the Middle East for a total of ¥1.2 trillion (\$15 billion), while LNG from the ASEAN group of nations grew 20% to a value of ¥1.9 trillion (\$24 billion). Russia sold 62% more LNG to Japan for a value of ¥375 billion (\$4.7 billion), and the USA sent 143% more coal for ¥128 billion (\$1.6 billion). Some 39% more oil was imported last year for a total value of ¥2.2 trillion (\$28 billion), some of this for power generation.

Manufacturing performance was dented by the earthquake and tsunami, particularly in cars and car parts as well as the computing, semiconductor and audio-visual sectors.

A negative trade balance for Japan as a nation bore out these effects for March, April and May, before recovery in August and September. Trade deficit returned in the colder months of November and December.

The figures may help Japanese leaders make a strong case for restarting operable nuclear power plants, should these be acknowledged by regulators as having passed the two-stage program of stress tests. The government has invited the International Atomic Energy Agency to discuss and comment on the stress test program.

Japan is currently in the process of developing a new energy policy, which will see energy efficiency and renewable technologies prioritised alongside stalwart nuclear and fossil fuels. Leaders have been frank in dismissing any hopes of meeting climate change targets.

*Researched and written
by World Nuclear News*