

This Week's Update — To discussion towards state of nuclear power plants (4th June, 2012)

GEPR Editorial Staffs

In Japan, restart of nuclear power plant has become a political issue since after the Fukushima accident inspection period of nuclear power plants had been prolonged. This is because in Kansai region, there were governors who opposed.

Regarding restart of Oi Nuclear Power Plant Unit 3 and 4 of Kansai Electric Power, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said "I, as a Prime Minister, will determine with my own responsibility". This is de facto recognition of resuming operation of Oi Nuclear power Plants.

In Kansai region, without restart of the nuclear power plant, power shortage of 15% at peak demand is expected this summer. In order to avoid adverse effects, restart is a foregone conclusion. However, its execution is delayed.

In Japan, the use of fossil fuels such as natural gas in power generation increased, and increase of burden on the people is a concern. In 2011, import of fossil fuels amounted to ¥22 trillion (\$275 billion), up ¥4.4 trillion (\$55 billion) from the previous year. Japan is a country who does not produce but imports almost all sources of energy.

GEPR hopes that with restart as a start, domestic turmoil over pros and cons of nuclear power plant will calm down, and that calm discussion on how energy policy should be will spread

1) Dr. Nobuo Ikeda, president of Agora Institute that run GEPR, contributed "Conditions of liberalization of the electric power - Lessons from liberalization of telecommunications industry" (English translation coming soon). In Japan, review of regional monopoly of power companies is being investigated. This paper looks back on the history of privatization of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation in 1980s. In the liberalization process, government supported companies such as DDI, to promote competition. In the liberalization of power now, however, there seems to be no potential new entrants, therefore, he points out the possibility that there will be no competition.

2) Chikako Uneyama, National Institute of Health Sciences, contributed a column "Risk assessment of radioactive materials and carcinogens in food – Considering the impact of the Fukushima nuclear accident" (English translation coming soon). There are in fact many unknown risks in food. She points out that considering from what we currently know, the effect of the Fukushima accident is not by far the highest compared to other risks.

This Week's Link

1) ["Noda vows to take 'ultimate responsibility' on restart of Oi reactors"](#)

2) ["International Agencies Calls for Actions on Natural Gas Safety"](#)

National Geographic magazine in the U.S. reports expectations and concerns over increase in the mining of shale gas in the U.S.

3) ["IEA sets out the 'Golden Rules' needed to usher in a Golden Age of Gas"](#)

This is ranked as a special report of IEA "Survey of World Energy," which IEA announces in November each year.