

Treated radioactive wastewater set to be released in ocean worries businesses in Japan

From: Mari Yamaguchi;The Associated Press: July24/2023

IWAKI, JAPAN - Beach season has started across Japan, which means seafood for holiday makers and good times for business owners. But in Fukushima, that may end soon.

Within weeks, the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant is expected to start releasing treated radioactive wastewater into the sea, a highly contested plan still facing fierce protests in and outside Japan.

Residents worry that the water discharge, 12 years after the nuclear disaster, could deal another setback to Fukushima's image and hurt their businesses and livelihoods.

"Without a healthy ocean, I cannot make a living." said Yukinaga Suzuki, a 70-year-old innkeeper at Usuiso beach in Iwaki about 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of the plant. And the government has yet to announce when the water release will begin.

While officials say the possible impact would be limited to rumours, it's not yet clear if it will be damaging to the local economy. Residents say they feel "shikataganai" -- meaning helpless.

Suzuki has requested officials hold the plan at least until the swimming season ends in mid-August.

"If you ask me what I think about the water release, I'm against it. But there is nothing I can do to stop it as the government has one-sidedly crafted the plan and will release it anyway," he said. "Releasing the water just as people are swimming at sea is totally out of line, even if there is no harm."

The beach, he said, will be in the path of treated water travelling south on the Oyashio current from off the coast of Fukushima Daiichi. That's where the cold Oyashio current meets the warm, northbound Kuroshio, making it a rich fishing ground.

The government and the operator, Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings, or TEPCO, have struggled to manage the massive amount of contaminated water accumulating since the 2011 nuclear disaster, and announced plans to release it to the ocean during the summer.

They say the plan is to treat the water, dilute it with more than a hundred times the seawater and then release it into the Pacific Ocean through a undersea tunnel.

(Continued next column)

(From last column) **Treated radioactive wastewater** Doing so, they said, is safer than national and international standards require.

Suzuki is among those who are not fully convinced by the government's awareness campaign that critics say only highlights safety. "We don't know if it's safe yet," Suzuki said. "We just can't tell until much later."

The Usuiso area used to have more than a dozen family-run inns before the disaster. Now, Suzuki's half-century old Suzukame, which he inherited from his parents 30 years ago, is the only one still in business after surviving the tsunami. He heads a safety committee for the area and operates its only beach house.

Suzuki says his inn guests won't mention the water issue if they cancel their reservations and he would only have to guess. "I serve fresh local fish to my guests, and the beach house is for visitors to rest and chill out. The ocean is the source of my livelihood."

The March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi plant's cooling systems, causing three reactors to melt and contaminating their cooling water, which has since leaked continuously. The water is collected, filtered and stored in some 1,000 tanks, which will reach their capacity in early 2024.

The government and TEPCO say the water must be removed to make room for the plant's decommissioning, and to prevent accidental leaks from the tanks because much of the water is still contaminated and needs retreatment.

Katsumasa Okawa, who runs a seafood business in Iwaki, says those tanks containing contaminated water bother him more than the treated water release. He wants to have them removed as soon as possible, especially after seeing "immense" tanks occupying much of the plant complex during his visit few years ago.

An accidental leak would be "an ultimate strikeout ... It will cause actual damage, not reputation," Okawa says. "I think the treated water release is unavoidable." It's eerie, he adds, to have to live near the damaged plant for decades.

Fukushima's badly hit fisheries community, tourism and the economy are still recovering. The government has allocated 80 billion yen (US\$573 million) to support still-feeble fisheries and seafood processing and combat potential reputation damage from the water release.

(Continued page 2)

(From page 1) **Treated radioactive wastewater**

His wife evacuated to her parents' home in Yokohama, near Tokyo with their four children, but Okawa stayed in Iwaki to work on reopening the store. In July, 2011, Okawa resumed sale of fresh fish -- but none from Fukushima.

Local fishing was returning to normal operation in 2021 when the government announced the water release plan.

Fukushima's local catch today is still about one-fifth of its pre-disaster levels due to a decline in the fishing population and smaller catch sizes.

Japanese fishing organizations strongly opposed Fukushima's water release, as they worry about further damage to the reputation of their seafood as they struggle to recover. Groups in South Korea and China have also raised concerns, turning it a political and diplomatic issue. Hong Kong has vowed to ban the import of aquatic products from Fukushima and other Japanese prefectures if Tokyo discharges treated radioactive wastewater into the sea.

China plans to step up import restrictions and Hong Kong restaurants began switching menus to exclude Japanese seafood. Agricultural Minister Tetsuro Nomura acknowledged some fishery exports from Japan have been suspended at Chinese customs, and that Japan was urging Beijing to honour science.

"Our plan is scientific and safe, and it is most important to firmly convey that and gain understanding," TEPCO official Tomohiko Mayuzumi told The Associated Press during its plant visit. Still, people have concerns and so a final decision on the timing of the release will be a "a political decision by the government," he said.

Japan sought support from the International Atomic Energy Agency for transparency and credibility. IAEA's final report, released this month and handed directly to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, concluded that the method meets international standards and it's environmental and health impacts would be negligible. IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said radioactivity in the water would be almost undetectable and there is no cross-border impact.

Scientists generally agree that environmental impact from the treated water would be negligible, but some call for more attention on dozens of low-dose radionuclides that remain in the water, saying data on their long-term effect on the environment and marine life is insufficient.

Radioactivity of the treated water is so low that once it hits the ocean it will quickly disperse and become almost undetectable, which makes pre-release sampling of the water important for data analysis, said University of Tokyo environmental chemistry professor Katsumi Shozugawa.

He said the release can be safely carried out and trusted "only if TEPCO strictly follows the procedures as planned." Diligent sampling of the water, transparency and broader cross-checks -- not just limited to IAEA and two labs commissioned by TEPCO and the government -- is key to gaining trust, Shozugawa said.

Japanese officials characterize the treated water as a tritium issue, but it also contains dozens of other radionuclides that leaked from the damaged fuel.

(Continued next column)

(From last column) **Treated radioactive wastewater**
Though they are filtered to legally releasable levels and their environmental impact deemed minimal, they still require close scrutiny, experts say.

TEPCO and government officials say tritium is the only radionuclide inseparable from water and is being diluted to contain only a fraction of the national discharge cap, while experts say heavy dilution is needed to also sufficiently lower concentration of other radionuclides.

"If you ask their impact on the environment, honestly, we can only say we don't know," Shozugawa, referring to dozens of radionuclides whose leakage is not anticipated at normal reactors, he says. "But it is true that the lower the concentration, the smaller the environmental impact," and the plan is presumably safe, he said.

The treated water is a less challenging task at the plant compared to the deadly radioactive melted debris that remain in the reactors, or the continuous, tiny leaks of radioactivity to the outside.

Shozugawa, who has been regularly measuring radioactivity of groundwater samples, fish and plants near Fukushima Daiichi plant since the disaster, says his 12 years of sampling work shows small amounts of radioactivity from the Fukushima Daiichi has continuously leaked into groundwater and the port at the plant. He says its potential impact on the ecosystem also requires closer attention than the controlled release of the treated water.

TEPCO denies new leaks from the reactors and attributes high cesium in fish sometimes caught inside the port to sediment contamination from initial leaks and rainwater drainage.

A local fisheries cooperative executive Takayuki Yanai told a recent online event that forcing the water release without public support only triggers reputational damage and hurts Fukushima fisheries. "We don't need additional burden to our recovery."

"Public understanding is lacking because of distrust to the government and TEPCO," he said. "The sense of safety only comes from trust."

The armed world and the wars it wages will be destroyed one day, but not by the kinds or the rulers of this world. War is profitable for them. War will stop the moment the people who suffer from war fully understand that it is evil

Leo Tolstoy

Look around. What do the world's people think about it? They think about everything except what is most important. They think about dancing, music, and singing; they think about houses, wealth, and power; they are jealous about the wealth of rich people and kings; but they do not think at all about what it means to be human.

After Blaise Pascal

Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

**BPI web site: www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org
For info contact Laura at (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434
or email: L4peace@telus.net.**

UN International Days

- Aug. 9:** International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- Aug.12:** International Youth Day
- Aug. 19:** World Humanitarian Day
- Aug. 21:** International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism
- Aug. 22:** International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition
- Aug.29:** International Day against Nuclear Tests
- Aug. 30:** International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

Global Days of Action:

- Aug. 6:** Hiroshima Day
- Aug. 9:** Nagasaki Day

US deploys nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea in show of force against North Korea

By: Hyung-jin Kim, The Associated Press: July 18, 2023

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The United States deployed a nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea on Tuesday for the first time in four decades, as the allies warned North Korea that any use of the North's nuclear weapons in combat would result in the end of its regime.

Periodic visits by U.S. nuclear ballistic missile-capable submarines to South Korea were one of several agreements reached by the two countries' presidents in April in response to North Korea's expanding nuclear threat. They also agreed to establish a bilateral Nuclear Consultative Group and expand military exercises.

The USS Kentucky, an Ohio-class submarine, arrived at the South Korean port of Busan on Tuesday afternoon, South Korea's Defense Ministry said. It is the first visit by a U.S. nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea since the 1980s, it said.

Defense Minister Lee Jong-Sup called the submarine's visit a demonstration of U.S. resolve in implementing its
(Continued next column)

(From last column) US deploys nuclear-armed submarine

"extended deterrence" commitment, a pledge by the U.S. to use its full military capabilities, including nuclear weapons, to protect its allies, the ministry said in a statement.

He said the submarine's visit "shows the allies' overwhelming capability and posture against North Korea."

During the Cold War in the late 1970s, U.S. nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarines made frequent visits to South Korea, sometimes two or three times per month, according to the Federation of American Scientists. It was a period when the U.S. had hundreds of nuclear warheads located in South Korea. But in 1991, the United States withdrew all of its nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula.

North Korea's nuclear ambitions have taken on a new urgency after it threatened to use nuclear weapons in conflicts with its rivals and conducted about 100 missile tests since the start of last year. Last week, North Korea conducted a second test of a more mobile and powerful intercontinental ballistic missile designed to strike the mainland United States. After observing that launch, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to further strengthen his country's nuclear combat capabilities.

Also on Tuesday, South Korean and U.S. officials held the inaugural meeting of the Nuclear Consultative Group in Seoul to discuss ways to strengthen deterrence against North Korea's nuclear threats.

"Any nuclear attack by North Korea against the United States or its allies is unacceptable and will result in the end of that regime," the two countries said in a joint statement after the meeting.

President Joe Biden issued a similar warning after his summit in Washington with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in April.

"Both sides affirmed that the NCG will play an integral role in discussing and advancing bilateral approaches, including guidelines, to nuclear and strategic planning and responses to (North Korean) aggression," the statement said.

The consultative body is tasked with sharing information on nuclear and strategic weapons operation plans and joint operations. The U.S. will retain operational control of its nuclear weapons. U.S. officials say the group's establishment and other steps announced in April were meant to ease South Korean worries about North Korean provocations while keeping Seoul from pursuing its own nuclear program.

Earlier Tuesday, Yoon told a Cabinet meeting that the launching of the consultative group "will serve as an important starting point to establish a powerful, effective (South) Korea-U.S. extended deterrence," and that their alliance has been "upgraded with a new, nuclear-based paradigm."

The meeting was co-chaired by U.S. National Security Coordinator for Indo-Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell and South Korean Deputy National Security Director Kim Tae-hyo.

(Continued page 4)

WHAT'S UP?

Nagasaki Day on August 12th @ Boundary Museum (Fructova School) @ 1 pm in Grand Forks, B.C. *Remembering Nagasaki; Honouring All Victims of the Nuclear Industry; Working For a World Free of All Weapons of Mass Destruction.*

Hiroshima Day Commemoration on August 6th @ 5:30 pm @ Zuckerberg Island, Castlegar, B.C.



International Day of Peace is coming in September. Details in the next issue.

For more info on these events go to www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Go to the Government of Canada website for MP email and phone contact at: <http://www.canada.gc.ca>

The BPI welcomes your input. Articles may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524 or 250-442-0434** or email **L4peace@telus.net**.

The BPI is an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Pledge Union, Abolition 2000, CNANW and works with various local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

(From page 3) **US deploys nuclear-armed submarine**

North Korea condemned the Biden-Yoon agreements in April, saying they proved the allies' extreme hostility toward the North. It threatened to further escalate its nuclear use doctrine in protest.

In a statement Monday, Kim's powerful sister and senior adviser, Kim Yo Jong, warned that U.S. moves to reinforce its extended deterrence commitment to South Korea will make North Korea "go farther away from the negotiating table desired by (the U.S.)" and beef up its own military capability.

"(North Korea) is ready for resolutely countering any acts of violating its sovereignty and territorial integrity," Kim Yo Jong said. "The U.S. should stop its foolish act of provoking (North Korea) even by imperiling its security."

Linkages

By: *Janet Mancini Billson*

They said that war could be avoided if
and only if the tyrant dropped his fantasies
long enough to lose face:
No linkages with peace talks.

We waged war to avoid talking about peace.
Now there is peace, and we send our diplomats
to talk about the same peace that we went to war over.
No linkages, they said.

But I saw the eyes of a child in Baghdad,
whose mother was drawn into the inferno
of a bomb shelter, melted down,
with her sisters and their children.

And I saw the eyes of a child in the West Bank,
whose father was dragged into the void
of a prison, beaten down
with his brothers and their ideas.

And the eyes of a child in Israel,
whose friend was smothered by her own gas mask,
and the eyes of an old man with a violin,
playing to masked Israelis as sirens wailed.

And the eyes of a child in North Carolina,
whose mother might not come home again,
and the eyes of a Palestinian youth who was afraid
that his Jewish piano teacher might stop the lessons,
killing his gift as part of the chaos,
and the eyes of a Palestinian man, fresh blood on his shirt,
delivering a savage message to four Jewish women.

No linkages...?

(Award of Merit, *Visions and Beyond*, Creative Arts and Science Enterprises, Charles J. Palmer and Jacqueline Palmer, Eds., 1992.)