

Catastrophic Nuclear Crisis Looming in Japan

by stele *Monday, Apr 11 2011, 11:23pm*

international / environment / commentary

Japanese authorities today announced they have raised the nuclear crisis level at the devastated Fukushima nuclear plant to the highest on the scale, 7; only Chernobyl reached this catastrophic level previously. Nevertheless, we should not confuse the two incidents, as Fukushima has SIX powerful reactors in varying degrees of crisis whereas Chernobyl was a single reactor. Fukushima threatens to DWARF the Chernobyl catastrophe.



Recent fire at No. 4 reactor extinguished today

Authorities typically understated the severity of the crisis and were at pains to say that raising alerts is a precautionary measure; however, the raised alert also coincided with an increase in the evacuation safety zone around the plant; the safety range has been increased to 50 kilometres from the nuclear plant.

While Corporatists and their markets attempt to paint a less sombre picture of the crisis, the facts INDICATE OTHERWISE.

The situation has been 'out of control' since the mega quake. Cooling systems, including safety BACKUPS, FAILED completely. The world noted with consternation the desperate measures Japanese engineers took to cool stricken reactors by pumping water directly from the sea to cool reactors and exposed spent fuel rods housed in the same buildings! Radioactive water has been allowed to evaporate into the atmosphere and drain directly into the land and sea - a scandalous situation indicating ill-conceived planning and crisis management protocols (corrupt cost cutting in other words); however, Corporatists, Tokyo Electric and GE (General Electric) have PROFITS to consider and clearly sacrificed PUBLIC and ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY in order to maximise their bottom line - a story all too familiar when man made large scale catastrophes occur.

After the BP Gulf disaster and now Fukushima, it should clearly be evident to all that Transnational Corporations involved in industries which could impact negatively on the environment REQUIRE the STRICTEST REGULATION, locally and if appropriate, internationally. Bought western governments completely under the control of Corporatists MUST be REPLACED with REAL, FUNCTIONAL DEMOCRACIES which represent MAJORITY interests - not minority criminal elites -- if we are to

avoid future calamity. Surely that NEED should NOW be obvious to everyone, including the long suffering, Corporatist ruled, American population.

Report from The Telegraph UK, follows:

Japan raises nuclear crisis to highest level -- same as Chernobyl

by Julian Ryall

Previously, the damage to reactors at the plant, 137 miles north of Tokyo, has been rated at level 5 on the scale, putting it on a par with the Three Mile Island accident in the United States in 1979. The government elevated the disaster by two notches, a rating that has previously only been applied to the Chernobyl accident in 1986.

The government's decision is based on a preliminary calculation by the Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan that estimated that the plant was venting as much as 10,000 terabecquerels of radioactive iodine-131 into the atmosphere every hour at one point after being damaged by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

One terabecquerel is equivalent to 1 trillion becquerels, the agency said, although it now estimates the nuclear plant is releasing less than 1 terabecquerel per hour.

The agency also said radiation beyond the amount considered safe for humans during a full year had been detected up to 37 miles northwest of the plant and 24 miles to the southwest, well beyond the 18-mile exclusion zone the government has imposed around the nuclear plant.

The operator of the Fukushima plant also revealed that it fears the radiation being leaked may surpass the amount that escaped into the atmosphere when the Chernobyl plant exploded in 1986.

"The radiation leak has not stopped completely and our concern is that it could eventually exceed Chernobyl," an official from the company told reporters in Tokyo.

On Monday, the government indicated that it plans to expand the evacuation zone in some areas that are found to have high levels of radiation. The authorities also intend to impose a law banning people from entering the no-go district around the plant to deter residents from returning to their homes to try to salvage their possessions.

The latest indication of the severity of the situation at the plant will inevitably cause renewed safety concerns across Japan, which is also still struggling to come to terms with the twin natural disasters that have claimed around 28,000 lives and devastated several hundred miles of coastline in north-east Japan.

Earlier, workers discovered a fire close to the Number 4 reactor at the Fukushima plant but quickly extinguished it, according to Tokyo Electric Power Co. The company said the fire was in a battery box and had no effect on radiation levels around the reactor.

The facility and much of northern and eastern Japan were jolted in two large aftershocks on Tuesday morning, hard on the heels of a level 7 earthquake on Monday evening.

A 5.5 quake shook Nagano Prefecture at 7:26 am, followed by a larger 6.4 tremor shortly after 8am that was felt throughout eastern Japan and made skyscrapers in Tokyo sway.

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