

Trilateral Views: Promoting Nuclear Safety Cooperation in Northeast Asia

Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS)

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ZHANG Ou

With the number of nuclear power plants soaring, the Chinese government is putting a top priority on nuclear safety. China's nuclear industry has huge potential for growth because: Firstly, China's economy remains strong and China is committed to overhauling its energy industry, energy security and environmental protection; secondly, China has set up a long-term nuclear power development plan; and thirdly, China has accumulated enough experience in plant design and operation, and management of engineering personnel for stability of the facilities.

China has been constantly promoting and publicizing nuclear safety since China's National Nuclear Safety Administration (NNSA) and National Energy Administration (NEA) jointly announced a policy statement for nuclear safety in 2014. On the other hand, the safety of nuclear power plants in operation has emerged as the most pressing challenge. Beijing should improve the safety of planned plants and seek public understanding of the nuclear power and radioactive waste treatment.

China has made remarkable achievements through bilateral (MOUs and co-hosting of semi-

nar on nuclear safety) and trilateral cooperation in nuclear programs. The latest developments in the three country's nuclear industries have been shared and discussed at the Top Regulators' Meeting (TRM) on Nuclear Safety and other high-level policy conferences. On top of cooperation with Korea and Japan, China seeks broader ties with other countries on nuclear safety.

KIM Kyun-tae

Korea launched safety programs to effectively respond to serious nuclear accidents after the Three Mile Island disaster took place in 1979. The regulations for building new nuclear power plants were improved during the 1990s. Korea has been continuing efforts to comprehensively strengthen nuclear safety capabilities since 2001. The country beefed up nuclear safety after the Fukushima accident in Japan by implementing 50 additional measures to respond more effectively to emergencies. These additional measures, specifically designed not only to respond to natural disasters, but also to prepare post-accident action plans, upgraded the level of emergency preparedness while promoting the independent status of the regulatory body of

Korea.

Calls were raised for parliamentary actions in the wake of the Fukushima accident. Last year, Korean lawmakers passed a revision to the Nuclear Safety Act, aimed at strengthening nuclear safety rules in the case of emergencies like the Fukushima accident. The revision provided rules on all situations, including serious nuclear accidents, and made it a rule for all existing and new plants to submit accident management reports to the government to maintain a high level of emergency readiness.

The Korean authorities are actively exploring ways of cooperating with Japan and China on all kinds of nuclear issues. Their cooperation covers all regulated fields. Enough opportunities to promote technological cooperation should first be given to their respective nuclear regulatory authorities.

Kenich FUJITA

Last April, the Kumamoto region of Kyushu was struck by a strong earthquake. The Japanese authorities were quick to share the emergency information with their citizens, quickly informing them of the earthquake's possible impact on the nuclear power plants in the affected area. They played a crucial role in letting the people know what was happening regardless of the severity or scale of the disaster. They are still keeping their citizens informed of the status of the nuclear power plants in Kumamoto through websites, emergency texting services, and social and other media.

Japan's nuclear regulatory body was positively evaluated by the Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) last January. Japan's nuclear regulator was praised by the IAEA team, particularly for being swift in establishing a transparent regulatory body and effective rebuilding work within the regulatory framework after the Fukushima accident. Meantime, the IAEA suggested that the Japanese regulatory authority improve human resources, amend relevant laws and continue to promote safety culture. The mission's final report was released to the public.

Japan is prepared to strengthen cooperation with China and Korea on the basis of the TRM mechanism with a view to building trust in the safety of



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nuclear power not only among the Northeast Asian countries but also among the rest of the world.

Policy Implications

- It is important to promote trilateral cooperation for nuclear safety regulation through the TRM mechanism. It is possible to formulate proactive and specific policy guidelines within the trilateral framework. The TRM, which pursued cooperation of the three countries for more than eight years, is significantly affecting the improvement of nuclear safety regulations of the countries.
- The three countries have tried very hard to strengthen the safety of nuclear power plants. The safety culture is contributing to the enhancement of awareness of the need for higher safety standards.
- The TRM, the key platform for cooperation among China, Korea and Japan, has made remarkable achievements, particularly since the 2012 Fukushima nuclear accident. Panelists of this session agreed on suggesting that the trilateral partnership for nuclear safety be strengthened and upgraded on the basis of the TRM system.
- Discussions in this session have reassured us that implementation of and experience in safety regulations, particularly including the guarantee of nuclear power safety for the promotion of safety culture, is part of sustainable progress. Also, high level of nuclear safety measures are taken in each country. The trilateral cooperation in nuclear power safety contributes to nuclear safety not only of Northeast Asia but also the rest of the world.