

Major News related to Atomic Energy in Japan in 2008

- The G8 Summit was held in July in Toyako (Toya-lake) in Hokkaido. Nuclear power won significant recognition as a vital contributor to reducing greenhouse gases. Japan proposed an international initiative regarding the organization of a nuclear energy infrastructure based on the “3 Ss” of safeguards, safety and security.
- General progress was being made in response to the damage caused by the Niigata Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake of July 16, 2007. Inspections were conducted at the Kashiwazaki Kariwa NPS, with restoration work generally progressing smoothly. The final seismic back-check by the national government is in its final stages. Explanations on the work were given to residents in the vicinity of the facility, with various symposia and other meetings also held.
- Progress was also made in the program to advance the use of mixed plutonium-uranium oxide (MOX) fuel, the so-called “Pu-thermal” plan. Construction began at an ABWR (advanced boiling water reactor) at Ohma NPS (J-Power Co.) using full MOX. Each power utility in Japan is similarly moving forward with their plans to adopt the fuel.
- The completion date of the Rokkasho Reprocessing Plant in Aomori Prefecture was pushed back to 2009 owing to troubles in the melting furnace.
- Resumption of operations at the FBR (fast breeder reactor) Monju was postponed owing to inspections of the sodium-leakage detector, among other reasons. Criticality is expected to be re-achieved in February 2009.
- A ministerial ordinance was promulgated relating to the implementation of a new inspection system scheduled to go into effect in January 2009.
- The Nobel Prize in Physics for 2008 was awarded to one American originally from Japan, Yoichiro Nambu, and to two Japanese, Makoto Kobayashi and Toshihide Maskawa, for their work on particle-physics research.
- Japanese companies stepped up their investments in uranium mine development overseas, with development and rights acquisition taking place in such countries as Australia and Kazakhstan.
- Usage began of the big accelerator project J-PARC (Japan Particle Accelerator Research Complex), located in Tokaimura, Ibaraki Prefecture.
- Ordering began of the major components for use in the construction of the ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) project. Work is moving forward at Rokkasho-mura (Aomori Prefecture) and the JT-60 BA (Broader Approach) projects.
- Discussions about international nuclear energy strategy shifted into full swing.
- Momentum gained in the United States for COL (combined construction and operating license) applications toward the construction of new nuclear power stations. Increased cooperation was also seen between the private sectors of the United States and Japan in that field.

Editor: Mio Kimuro, JAIF