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GERMAN COURT FORBIDS LONGER RUNNING TIMES FOR OLDEST NUKES

Good news from the highest administrative court in Germany: The country's two oldest nuclear power stations are not allowed to extend their operation. Anti-nuclear groups are likely to rejoice. This decision makes it even more likely that all nuclear power stations in Germany will stop operation in a bit more than a decade, as in the corresponding law.

(686.5939) **Diet Simon** - The ruling by the Federal Administrative Court in Leipzig concerns the power stations at Brunsbüttel, about 90 kilometers from Hamburg at the mouth of the Elbe River, and Biblis A, about 60 kilometers from Frankfurt. Hamburg is Germany's second-largest city with about 1.7 million people, Frankfurt its fourth-largest with 650,000.

Biblis A	2010
Neckarwestheim 1	2010
Biblis B	2010
Brunsbüttel	2012
Isar 1	2011
Unterweser	2012
Philippsburg 1	2012
Grafenrheinfeld	2014
Krümmel	2019
Gundremmingen	2015
Philippsburg 2	2018
Grohnde	2018
Gundremmingen C	2015
Brokdorf	2019
Isar 2	2020
Emsland	2020
Neckarwestheim	2022

Block A in Biblis was the first nuclear power plant in the then West Germany, starting operation in 1961. Brunsbüttel started up in 1976. Both nukes have a history of mishaps, including near-meltdown at Brunsbüttel. Biblis has the dubious reputation of being a "junkyard reactor" because of the frequency of its breakdowns.

The Leipzig judgment, handed down on 26 March, 2009, confirmed those of lower courts and rejected complaints by the power companies operating the plants. The owners wanted to achieve longer running times by transferring the remaining output quota of another station to these two.

There is tension in the fractious coalition government of conservatives and social democrats over a past government's law (the 2000 Phase-out law) to close down all German nuclear power production in about ten years. According to the German Ministry of the Environment (BMU), Biblis A has some 180 operational days to go ('Restlaufzeit'). Because Brunsbüttel is out of operation since an accident in July 2007 the closure, originally planned spring 2009, is now set far beyond the September general elections (actually 2012). Neckarwestheim-I will likely be the next one to be closed and has some 320 operational days left. According to the phase-out law, the last of the 17 nuclear

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power plants has to shut down in 2022. (See table)

The power industry is lobbying hard to have the law overturned and is backed in this by Chancellor Angela Merkel, a conservative. Nuclear power will be an important issue in the coming national elections late September. On September 5, three weeks before the elections, a nation-wide antinuclear demonstration is planned in Berlin. The

demonstration is also to commemorate the 'Tractor-treck' 30 years ago, when farmers from the Wendland-region traveled to Hannover (the capital of Lower Saxony) to protest the plans for a reprocessing plant, a nuclear fuel plant, an interim storage and a final disposal-facility at Gorleben. In Hannover, five days later, 100,000 people joined the farmers in one of the largest anti-nuclear demonstrations in Germany.

Source: Diet Simon / website BMU: <http://www.erneuerbare-energien.de/inhalt/43032/4590/>

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ANIMALS WORSE AFFECTED BY CHERNOBYL RADIATION THAN THOUGHT

A French-American study proves that radiation from Chernobyl nuclear disaster has affected animals far more than previously thought. Three years of extensive research shows a significant correlation between increasing radioactivity and declining number of species of insects and other invertebrates in the vicinity of Chernobyl. The numbers of bumblebees, butterflies, spiders, grasshoppers and other invertebrates are lower in contaminated sites than other areas because of high levels of radiation left over from the blast more than 20 years ago.

(686.5940) **Laka Foundation** - The authors of the study note: "Pollination and predation are considered important ecosystem services, and disruption may affect the overall ecosystem functioning, suggesting that the Chernobyl region and its surroundings is a perturbed ecosystem." Team leaders Anders Møller, a researcher at the National Center for Scientific Research in France, and Timothy Mousseau, at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, report their findings in an article called "Reduced abundance of insects and spiders linked to radiation at Chernobyl 20 years after the accident." in *Biology Letters*, a journal published by The Royal Society.

Møller and Mousseau say they are amazed to see that there had been no other studies on this subject. There had been published a few articles more than ten years ago on genetic damage caused by Chernobyl radiation, on mice

and barn swallows, but not on abundance of animals in relation to the disaster. In an earlier publication (2006) the scientists said to be surprised that up to now only little research has been done on the biological and ecological consequences of Chernobyl in general. They stated: "This research is the consequence of investment by a few individuals, despite the fact that the effects of the disaster are continent-wide." More than a year ago the researchers and two colleagues of them mopped the floor with most of the studies on the consequences of Chernobyl that had been done and had received wide attention by the international media. They state: "Although Chernobyl is perhaps the largest environmental disaster ever, there has been minimal monitoring of the status of free-living organisms or humans in stark contrast to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where careful monitoring has continued for over 60 years." They asked themselves: "Why has there

been no concerted effort to monitor the long-term effects of Chernobyl on free-living organisms and humans?" And further on: "The official reports by IAEA, WHO and UNDP were narrative renditions of parts of the literature [...]. Scientific enquiry depends on rigorous analysis of data rather than rendition of anecdotal evidence."

The only comparable data for abundance and diversity of insects and other invertebrates at Chernobyl is a study on birds that show similar patterns. Almost two years ago Møller and Mousseau studied birds around Chernobyl. They examined 7700 barn swallows from Chernobyl and compared them with birds from elsewhere. They found that Chernobyl's swallows were more likely to have tumors, misshapen toes and feather deformities than swallows from uncontaminated parts of Europe. Rather than the impact of relocation and stress and deteriorating living

Call to participate in international "Chernobyl Day" action

On Saturday, the 25th and Sunday, the 26th of April 2009, let's get involved against nuclear power! Let's rally to organize a local "Masks against Denial" action. The action of April, the 26th 2008 found broad echo in the press (179 actions worldwide). In 2009, let's act locally for an even stronger mobilisation.

The main action is easy to take even with few people and simply consists in wearing a mask while standing on a symbolic place. 3000 original masks branded with radioactivity signs, symbolising Chernobyl victims and people suffering because of civil and military uses of nuclear technology worldwide, have been designed for this very occasion. Our organisation, Réseau "Sortir du nucléaire", will see to a broad national communication campaign.

We can propose you an example for a press release, flyers for the public and a big poster recalling World Health Organisation's 50 years of submission to the International Atomic Energy Agency. All together, during this day, we will make a strong address to the global public opinion. Register your action and order material for your action at: www.chernobyliday.org

conditions, as suggested by the IAEA in 2006, they suggested that nuclear fallout might be responsible for human birth defects in the region. "We don't fully understand the consequences of low doses of radiation," said Mousseau. "We should be more concerned about the human population."

Their latest findings challenge earlier research that suggested animal populations were rebounding around the site of the Chernobyl. These studies ignored the fact that animal populations had grown unimpeded in the absence of humans for many years after the blast, Møller said. The scientists claim they did the first study that was focusing the abundance of animal populations by comparing animal populations in radioactive areas with less contaminated plots. Some areas appeared to be nearly completely depleted of animal life. Though not yet published, the

researchers told Reuters they also found that animals living near the damaged reactor or sarcophagus had more deformities, including discoloration and stunted limbs, than normal. To a science reporter of BBC News Mousseau explained: "We want to expand the range of our coverage to include insects, mammals and plants. This study is the next in the series."

Møller is suggesting not to restrict their activities to the direct vicinity of Chernobyl. He said that many researchers are erroneously focusing on the 30-kilometer radius around Chernobyl reactor, because the fallout from the explosion covered a vast swathe of Eastern Europe, including parts of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. He expects that their findings probably apply to those areas as well.

An extensive and detailed chronology on Chernobyl and its consequences can be found on the Laka website.

Sources: Reuters, 18 March 2009 / BBC, 18 March 2009 /Anders Pape Møller and Timothy A. Mousseau, "Reduced abundance of insects and spiders linked to radiation at Chernobyl 20 years after the accident." *Biology Letters*, published online 18 March 2009 / Anders Pape Møller and Timothy A. Mousseau, "Biological consequences of Chernobyl: 20 years on." *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* Vol.21 No.4 April 2006 / A.P Møller, T.A Mousseau, F de Lope and N Saino, "Anecdotes and empirical research in Chernobyl." *Biology Letters*, 23 February 2008 vol. 4 no. 1 65-66 / WISE NC, 31 October 1997: "Chernobyl swallows suffer genetic damage"

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AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT POISED FOR ANNOUNCEMENT ON CONTROVERSIAL WASTE DUMP

After a decade of a haphazard and bullying approach to radioactive waste management, there had been a cautious sigh of relief when Labor committed to a different approach. The Rudd Labor government has continued with a culture of secrecy and broken promises regarding radioactive waste management in Australia. Recently the Australian Labor Party voted against a motion put up by the Greens to repeal the controversial waste dump laws, leaving targeted communities extremely concerned that an announcement of a dumpsite will be made soon.

(686.5941) Beyond Nuclear Initiative -

The previous conservative Liberal/National government spent ten years trying to force a national radioactive waste dump on Kokatha land in South Australia. A strong community campaign led by Senior Aboriginal cultural women, the Kungka Tjuta, and supported by national environment, health and student groups and the South Australian government forced the federal government to abandon that plan in 2004. The Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta wrote in an open letter: "*People said that you can't win against the Government. Just a few women. We just kept talking and telling them to get their ears out of their pockets and listen. We never said we were going to give up. Government has big money to buy their way out but we never gave up. We told Howard you should look after us, not try and kill us.*"

Straight out. We always talk straight out. In the end he didn't have the power, we did."

Though there was a 'categorical assurance' that a federal radioactive dump would not be imposed on another location in the Northern Territory (NT) of Australia, in July 2005 it was announced that three Department of Defence sites - Harts Range, Fisher's Ridge and Mt Everard- had been short-listed for assessment. There was no consultation with the Northern Territory Government or affected Traditional Owners and communities. None.

The draconian and undemocratic Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CRWMA) 2005 was then pushed through federal parliament, overriding NT laws

prohibiting transport and storage of nuclear waste. A raft of environmental, public health and safety protections went out the window because of this legislation. The legislation even prevents the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 from having effect during investigation of potential dumpsites.

Amendments passed the following year to the CRWMA override Aboriginal Land Rights Act procedures requiring informed consent from all affected people and groups. In fact, these changes explicitly state that site nominations from Aboriginal Land Councils are valid even in the absence of consultation with and consent from traditional owners.

Under the amended process, a site in the Muckatya land trust (120 km north of

Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory) was nominated by the Northern Land Council. Former Science Minister Julie Bishop accepted the contentious nomination in September 2007.

Though a small number of traditional owners agreed to the nomination in return for an Aus\$12 million dollar conditional package (if the site is finally selected), there has been sustained public opposition from a much larger group of traditional owners from the Land Trust.

Sammy Sambo, an elder of the Milwayi clan of Muckaty expresses the concern held by many people; *"We use that land for men's cultural ceremonies which came from our great grandfather. If they put a waste dump at Muckaty it betrays the next generation"*.

Julie Bishop had arrogantly asserted that the sites under assessment were "far from any houses" and "some distance from any form of civilization". Traditional Owner from Mt Everard, Steven McCormack emphasizes; *"This land is not empty - people live right nearby. We hunt and collect bush tucker here and I am the custodian of a sacred site within the boundaries of the defense land. We don't want this poison here"*.

Steven and his family live only three kilometers from the Mt Everard site and run a number of small business projects from their homeland, including hosting 'culture camps' for school children from interstate.

The Harts Range site is near Alcoota

Oops! In the last issue of the Nuclear Monitor (685: March 19), there were some big mistakes!

In the article 'The Curse of Three Mile Island', we said: "Currently one new plant costs between US\$6 million and US\$9 million" (p.4, third column). That, of course, has to be billion and not million.

Further, we published the same article twice, although with a different headline. A corrected version was sent again electronically a day later. Subscribers of the paper edition receive the article: 'Areva's MOX transport: A traveling security threat' enclosed in this issue.

Our apologies!

Station, a thriving Aboriginal owned and run cattle enterprise. William Tilmouth, chairman of Alcoota Aboriginal Corporation says that; *"Other pastoralists have also expressed concern over the perception by the public that the beef will be contaminated. The cattle industry out here prides itself on being clean and green"*.

In relation to the dump, the government has promised only 30 jobs for construction and 6 ongoing security positions (operating on rotation). Local industries near all of the proposed sites provide community based and long term employment for many more people.

A number of senior Australian Labor Party Ministers and Senators released media statements prior to the 2007 federal election pledging repeal of the CRWMA if elected. ALP politicians had referred to the legislation as 'draconian', 'sordid', 'arrogant' and 'profoundly shameful' when it was rammed through by the previous regime.

The Labor party's national conference in April 2007 also voted to repeal the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CRWMA) if elected, with Labor promised a method of addressing radioactive waste management issues which is "scientific, transparent, accountable, fair and allows access to appeal mechanisms" and to "ensure full community consultation in radioactive waste decision-making processes". [1]

After a decade of a haphazard and bullying approach to radioactive waste management, there had been a cautious sigh of relief when Labor committed to a different approach. However, the Rudd Government, with Minister Martin Ferguson in charge of the radioactive waste portfolio, has continued to be every bit as secretive.

On March 18, 2009, the ALP voted against a motion put up by the Greens to repeal the controversial waste dump laws, leaving targeted communities extremely concerned that an announcement of a dumpsite will be made soon.

The UK Committee on Radioactive Waste report released in June 2006 highlights how internationally; *"There is a growing recognition that it is not ethically acceptable for a society to impose a radioactive waste facility on an unwilling community"* [2].

In the case of the Northern Territory waste dump proposal, Muckaty Traditional Owner Marlene Bennett summarizes the approach;

"Most of our mob, we found out when we read it in the paper. What sort of consultative approach by the government is that?"

Australia remains a signatory to the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) statement of principles, which encourages uranium-exporting countries to take back high-level waste produced overseas in nuclear reactors. While the Rudd Labor government has ruled this out in the short term, it is important that international campaign groups support the remote Aboriginal communities in Australia resisting the imposition of a domestic dump, to resist the possibility of a high level international dump also being imposed in the future.

Dianne Stokes, a Muckaty Traditional Owner from the Yapa Yapa group who has spent years fighting the dump proposal expounds; *"Top to bottom we got bush tucker right through the country. Whoever is taking this waste dump into our country needs to come back and talk to the Traditional Owners. We're not happy to have all of this stuff. We don't want it, it's not our spirit. Our spirit is our country, our country where our ancestors been born. Before towns, before hospitals, before cities. We want our country to be safe"*.

Notes:

http://www.alp.org.au/platform/chapter_05.php/

<http://www.corwm.org.uk/pdf/Chapter14.pdf>, (point 12)

Source and contact: Natalie Wasley at Beyond Nuclear Initiative, Uranium Project.

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Web: <http://beyondnuclearinitiative.wordpress.com>

AREVA'S MOX TRANSPORT: A TRAVELING SECURITY THREAT

About 1.8 tons of plutonium in Mixed-Oxide (MOX) fuel, enough to make 225 nuclear weapons, left the French port of Cherbourg on March 5, to travel to Japan via the Cape of Good Hope and the southwest Pacific Ocean. It is due to arrive in Japanese waters by late-May, according to Areva. This shipment represents an immediate risk of contamination to coastal communities along the route should anything go wrong. The shipment is vulnerable to accident and terrorist attack and stands as a reminder to all governments along the route of the unacceptable risks nuclear energy poses to the world.

(685.5937) Greenpeace International - The dangerous transport is another attempt of the dying industry to survive. As the French nuclear industry and President Sarkozy aggressively try to sell the European Pressurized Reactor (EPR), the latest in nuclear reactors, under the false premise of a climate change solution, they conveniently ignore the very real dangers associated with it, including health risks and potential terrorist attack. EPR reactors are meant to run on 50-100% MOX fuel.

Japan has been trying to use MOX in their nuclear reactors for more than ten years; and have repeatedly failed. The first shipment to Japan in 1999 ended in fiasco after the producer, UK state company British Nuclear Fuels, admitted it had deliberately falsified vital quality control safety data. After an 18,000-mile voyage, the rejected fuel was shipped back to the UK. Two more cargoes, one delivered in 1999, the other in 2001, were opposed by local citizens and regional governments. Both shipments remain in storage with no prospect that they will ever be used.

There is plenty of evidence showing that the containers used to transport the MOX are not strong enough to withstand serious accidents or terrorist attack. Risk of fire is just one example, the containers are only tested over a few hours, but fires on board ships can last much longer (days or even weeks). Once MOX fuel disperses it poses a grave threat to public health and the environment.

Referring to a plutonium shipment in 2002, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda stated "our small states are fearful that a deliberate act of terror aimed at those ships may bring an end to our very existence. This is not fanciful or farfetched fiction." Considering all this, it is little wonder that plutonium and MOX shipments

have been opposed by dozens of governments and their citizens, since they started.

Areva denying proliferation risks

On the anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entering into force, the trade in nuclear bomb grade material between France and Japan seriously jeopardizes the international non-proliferation regime. As a result of civil nuclear programmes, the world now has more weapons usable plutonium in so-called commercial use than in all nuclear weapons arsenals put together.

In a March 2, open letter to Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the IAEA, Greenpeace states:

Our specific concerns are Areva's misrepresentation of the proliferation threat posed by commercial plutonium contained in this and other MOX fuel. They appear dangerously confused or deliberately denying the inherent proliferation risks of the Japanese plutonium MOX fuel. Specifically Areva (Henri Jacques Neau, Director of Transport) went on record March 1 saying: "It is impossible to make a nuclear weapon as suggested by Greenpeace. Here you must be clear, this MOX does not have any interest for any people to make a nuclear weapon from it. There is no interest in the diversion of this material. We have this level of protection, because the MOX fuel contains plutonium. Everything that contains plutonium must have a protective measure,"

Late February following an interview with French news agency, AFP, an industrial source (most likely Areva) was cited in the article stating that, "To make a bomb" out of MOX, "you would first need an installation in order to separate the plutonium from the uranium. And still, the result would only be plutonium of "civil" quality and not military quality,"

affirmed this source.

These statements are clearly misleading, stating as it does there is a distinction between civil and military grade plutonium. This, as you are aware is not the formal position of the IAEA, which classifies commercial plutonium MOX fuel as Category 1 nuclear material, requiring the highest level of security protection. As the IAEA safeguards glossary states, conversion of MOX fuel or powder to finished plutonium (metal) is of the order of 1-3 weeks.

Greenpeace is long used to Japanese nuclear industry denials that reactor-grade plutonium is a proliferation threat, and that it cannot be used to make nuclear weapons. However, you will be aware that as long ago as 1990 your predecessor Hans Blix confirmed to the Nuclear Control Institute that the IAEA does not dispute that reactor-grade plutonium can be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Now we have denials by the nuclear industry including an explicit denial by Areva, which we believe is in defiance of both the IAEA classification of reactor grade plutonium and MOX fuel, as well as senior nuclear weapons scientists and U.S. government departments, including the Department of Energy.

You will be aware that the U.S. Department of Energy first briefed Japan and other states on the proliferation risks from commercial reprocessing, reactor grade plutonium and MOX fuel more than 30 years ago.

Sources: Greenpeace Press release, 6 March 2009 / Letter to ElBaradei, 2 March 2009 which can be found at: www.greenpeace.org/international/press/reports/Open-letter-ElBaradei
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WIPP REQUESTS STIMULUS FUNDING FOR ALREADY FUNDED WORK

The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico, USA, celebrated the tenth anniversary of receiving its first shipment of transuranic waste by asking for US\$170 million (EUR 128 million) from the stimulus bill, called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The stimulus bill aims to create jobs, restore economic growth and strengthen America's middle class. The funding is required to be used by September 30, 2011.

(686.5942) CCNS - The WIPP Recovery Act Project proposes to accelerated the disposal of transuranic waste, as well as completing the certification requirements for a new, large shipping container, called a TRUPACT-III, and replace equipment, make renovations, conduct preventive maintenance, and make infrastructure improvements at the WIPP site. Such improvements include purchasing a crane, forklifts, vehicles, radiation contamination equipment and repaving the access road.

In 1979, Congress authorized the Department of Energy (DOE) to construct WIPP 26 miles east of Carlsbad, New Mexico. The radioactive and hazardous waste is buried 2,150 ft. beneath the surface in a salt formation. DOE claims that WIPP has been constructed to demonstrate the safe underground disposal of transuranic nuclear weapons waste presently stored at DOE facilities across the U.S.

Activists are concerned that WIPP is asking for stimulus funding for work it has either already been paid for or work

that should be funded under its annual appropriations. Don Hancock, with Southwest Research and Information Center, has raised concerns for years about the additional funding WIPP receives each year from Congress above its budget request and the decreasing amount of waste disposed, compared with the planned performance. For example, last year WIPP received the least amount of waste for disposal in the last seven years, but received almost \$235 million in funding, 107% of what was requested. Hancock said, "Because of a two-month shutdown, we already know that WIPP won't meet its disposal goals this year, even though it is receiving \$20 million more than it requested. Rather than getting more money, it should use its existing, more than adequate funding."

On the other hand, Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) has not asked for funding to address ground and surface water contamination that may impact Santa Fe's drinking water supplies. Each year, LANL receives about \$140 million for cleanup

activities. LANL anticipates receiving an additional \$200 million in stimulus funding. They have proposed to remove buildings and dig up old waste dumps at Technical Area 21, which is located on DP Road in downtown Los Alamos. These projects have been on the agenda for years, but have not received adequate funding.

CCNS remains concerned that stopping the transport of contamination through the canyons to the Rio Grande is not a LANL priority, nor is the investigation of the hexavalent chromium plume in the regional aquifer. Southwest Research and Information Center and CCNS urge DOE to shift the stimulus money that WIPP is requesting to focus on the water contamination problems at LANL.

Source: CCNS News Update, 27 March 2009

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LOOKING FOR A HOLIDAY DESTINATION IN EUROPE?

Anti-nuclear camp in Finnish Lapland

Youth for a Nuclear Free Finland (YNUFF) invites you to join and help create the 'International Youth Exchange for Nuclear Free Sustainable Living' to be held in Finnish Lapland from July 18 - 27, 2009. The Finnish youngsters are also looking for people to help organize this event, to give workshops, facilitate skill shares, and mobilize your local groups to come to Lapland! This international, intercultural youth exchange aspires to encourage and empower youth participation in European energy policy, addressing climate change, non-sustainable energy (especially) uranium / nuclear power, while promoting positive alternatives, environmental justice and Indigenous Peoples rights. Project objectives are to facilitate understanding of these issues and developing wide-ranging skills to participate in local and European level civic democracy. In response to the 'renaissance' of the nuclear industry this gathering seeks to strengthen the 'renaissance of resistance' to new nuclear power stations and uranium mining.
Contact: Youth for a Nuclear Free Finland, ynuuff2009@gmail.com

Climate camp in Copenhagen, Denmark

One of the bigger summer climate camps, held from July 11 to July 19, at the

seaside very close to the Danish capital Copenhagen. International presence will be very welcome. Everything will be translated and internationalized. The camp is a major step in the mobilization towards the COP15 climate summit protests in December. The camp will host more than a hundred different workshops about everything. Climate, social issues, science, bike building, playing, learning and training for change. The organizers welcome more people concerned about the issue of climate and nuclear energy. Contact the organizers via camp09@riseup.net. Check www.camp09.dk where more information will be put in the not-too distant future.

Friends of the Earth Youth summer camp in Croatia

This August Young FoEE (Friends of the Earth Europe) are running a week long summer training camp for 50 young activists from (but not only) the Foe network. The summer camp itself will be in Croatia, with a focus on capacity building and workshops on lots of skills and Foe related topics. It is a chance to get young FoEE introduced to and involved in other Foe campaigns, not just climate change, and to collaborate on future young Friends of the Earth Europe projects.

Check: <http://www.foeeurope.org/youngfoee/index.htm>

FRANCE: TRANSMUTATION TESTS ENDS AFTER CLOSURE PHENIX FBR

The troubled operational life of the sodium-cooled fast breeder reactor Phenix at Marcoule in southern France, ended on March 6. The reactor, which has been operated at 140 MWe on two of its original three loops for the past decade, will be shut permanently at year-end. The closure calls into question the future of French (and international) transmutation tests, which were conducted in the reactor. Phenix was connected to the grid 35 years ago and originally rated at 250 MWe.

(686.5943) WISE Amsterdam -

Transmutation of long-lived minor actinides in separated reactor waste into shorter-lived nuclides is seen as complementary to a spent fuel and waste management system based on reprocessing and recycling of plutonium and uranium. (see box) Proponents say transmutation holds the promise of dramatically reducing the period during which waste in a deep repository would have to be demonstrated as not giving rise to potential unacceptable doses on the surface. Studies in France and elsewhere have concluded that transmutation in thermal reactors is inefficient. Operation of Phenix as a transmutation facility was crucial to the scientific studies produced by the CEA, as directed by France's 1991 waste management R&D act and the follow-on waste planning act of 2006.

As long as the Monju fast breeder reactor in Japan remains offline, there is no similar facility in which to run the experiments on fast reactor fuel and on transmutation of long-lived radionuclides that have been conducted in Phenix. Within the Generation IV International Forum, Japan has the lead role in development of sodium-cooled fast reactor technology. Monju is supposed to be

the test bed for a program called Gacid (Global Actinide Cycle International Demonstration) that aims to demonstrate the full fuel cycle for partitioning and transmutation of minor actinides.

Monju, located in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture in Japan, is a 280 MWe sodium-cooled fast breeder. Construction started in 1985 and it achieved first criticality in April 1994. It is closed following a serious sodium leak and fire on December 8, 1995. Monju is expected to resume operation in 2010, however, that has been delayed many times. The unavailability of Monju "is not a bottleneck," Bernard Bigot, the new administrator general of the French atomic energy commission, the Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique, said. France's 2006 waste act calls for a conclusion on the feasibility of transmutation in a fourth-generation reactor by 2020. Bigot said that means there is time to reorganize the R&D program if the Japanese reactors can't be used.

Phenix, originally rated at 250 MWe, was built and operated by CEA as a prototype for a commercial series of fast reactors. To demonstrate that a fast reactor could produce electricity, EDF took a 20% stake in the project and was responsible for the power conversion and generation side of the

plant. Phenix has had various problems since it first achieved criticality in August 1973. In the next two decades, it experienced equipment and materials problems, including corrosion and fatigue-related cracking on austenitic steel components in its secondary circuits. Reevaluation of the seismic risk at Marcoule required considerable structural work.

In late 1989 and in 1990, Phenix experienced a series of four automatic scrams due to abnormal reactivity drops. After operating off and on for another cycle, Phenix was taken down in April 1995 for a major refurbishment and safety program estimated to have cost up to Eur250 million.

In late 1998, Phenix was given a reprieve from final shutdown by the then Left-Green government in exchange for a political decision to close its successor, the 1,240-MW Superphenix commercial demonstration FBR. Billions of euros had been invested in Superphenix, particularly by Electricite de France, which owned 51% of the facility.

Source: Nucleonics Week, 19 March 2009

Contact: WISE Amsterdam

Generation IV reactors (Gen IV) are a set of theoretical nuclear reactor designs currently being researched. Most of these designs are generally not expected to be available for commercial construction before 2020-2030. Current reactors in operation around the world are generally considered second- or third-generation systems, with the first-generation systems having been retired some time ago. The term 'Generation IV' was first mentioned on a January 2000 meeting of the Nuclear Science & Technology department of the US Department of Energy.

Minor actinides are the actinide elements in used nuclear fuel other than uranium and plutonium, which are termed the major actinides. The minor actinides include neptunium, americium, curium, berkelium, californium, einsteinium, and fermium. The most important isotopes in spent nuclear fuel are neptunium-237, americium-241, americium-243, curium-242 through -248, and californium-249 through -252.

Nuclear transmutation is the conversion of one chemical element or isotope into another, which occurs through nuclear reactions. Natural transmutation occurs when radioactive elements spontaneously decay over a long period of time and transform into other more stable elements. Artificial transmutation occurs in machinery that has enough energy to cause changes in the nuclear structure of the elements. Nuclear transmutation is considered as a possible mechanism for reducing the volume and hazard of radioactive waste. However, in practice many dangers, problems and uncertainties make the whole concept very unlikely and undesired.

Read more: "Nuclear Alchemy Gamble: An Assessment of Transmutation as a Nuclear Waste Management Strategy", IEER 2000, available at: <http://www.ieer.org/reports/transm/summary.html>

BELARUS, A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT, AND THE KGB

Debates are still ongoing on the issue of possible construction of a nuclear power plant in Belarus. The suggested site is in the Ostrovets District in the Grodno Region - or just some fifty kilometers away from neighboring Lithuania's capital of Vilnius. Lithuania is worried, Belarus' Foreign Affairs Ministry is circling the wagons, and Ostrovets residents keep collecting signatures for a petition to stop the project. All the while, the Belarusian KGB - still very much alive in this former Soviet republic,- is calling activists in for questioning, and the propaganda machine of the country's nuclear establishment is painting anti-nuclear protesters as members of sex minorities, quite a stigma in a country viewed widely as one of the Eastern European states with the worst human rights record.

(686.5944) **Bellona** - Initially, several sites were proposed to host the envisioned nuclear power plant in Belarus (the country which bore the brunt of the nuclear fallout from the 1986 Chernobyl disaster) The choice was between the regions surrounding such Belarusian cities as Mogilyov, Vitebsk, and Grodno.

Last January, reports appeared in Belarus' official media outlets that the choice had finally been made. The NPP is supposed to be built near the village of Mikhalishki in the Ostrovets District of the Grodno Region. However, as activists with an organization called The Anti-Nuclear Campaign of Belarus found out, no final decision had actually been settled upon: There was only a recommendation made by a certain unidentified commission, and making a formal decision to place a new nuclear power plant at a particular site is a prerogative afforded only the president of the country.

No reports, meanwhile, were coming that Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko had made up his mind on the future location. One guess seems appropriate that the media were either indulging in wishful thinking or simply not quite grasping the situation. It is likewise possible that the government had engaged in a disinformation offensive: Reports that a decision regarding a particular NPP location had ostensibly been made, combined with mass-scale pro-nuclear propaganda, may have been meant to spin public opinion the right way, as well as probe the likely reaction on the part of neighboring Lithuania. If the latter is true, then the idea must have been a raving success - Ostrovets residents are not exactly psyched about the prospects of living inside of a 30-

kilometre NPP safety zone, whereas Lithuania has already voiced concerns over the plans of building a nuclear power plant only 50 kilometers away from its capital, Vilnius.

Indeed, Lithuania authorities are currently in the grips of citing a new nuclear plant of their own, the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant. While the IAEA has given a nod to the project, Vilnius has a long way to go before it garners support from surrounding nations as part of its Espoo Convention obligations.

Belarusians against a nuclear power plant

As soon as Ostrovets became a hot news media item as the likeliest site for a future NPP, local residents realized there was a serious cause for worry. An obsessive NPP publicity campaign in the press pushed them enough to want to take action. In November 2008, a steering committee was put together to organize a public initiative dubbed "Ostrovets NPP is a Crime." Indeed, locals deem it none other than an atrocity that a nuclear power plant is slated to appear near where they live.

"We have no doubt that the construction of an NPP in our region in particular, and in post-Chernobyl Belarus in general, is not just a mistake, but speaks of criminal intent which would lead to another big and irreversible tragedy transcending by far the scope of national boundaries," a November 4th 2008, official statement signed by Ostrovets residents said. "We are extremely concerned about the possibility that an NPP would be built in our region and we are saying an unconditional 'No' to this lethally dangerous project."

KGB and local brass go to war - as they know it

The anti-nuclear initiative's steering committee initially comprised eight people, who found themselves immediately in a harrowing tug of war with local authorities eager to exert pressure with whatever resources they had at their disposal.

"They started serving us summons to appear for questioning at the KGB, intimidating us, saying: 'You are against the raiispolkom and the government,'" said Ivan Kruk, one of the steering committee's members, in a conversation with Bellona Web. Kruk was referring to a raionny ispolnitelny komitet - or a regional executive committee - simply said, the local administration. The so-called raiispolkoms are among the dinosaurs of the Soviet executive nomenclature that the former Soviet republic has chosen to preserve, along with the infamous KGB, after the USSR went defunct in 1991.

"The raiispolkom is carrying out a personal campaign against me; just recently they disseminated bogus flyers around the city, supposedly written by us, stating that we were from the Gay Party," said Kruk. He showed the falsified leaflet. One is positively envious of the creativity with which the Belarusian pro-nuclear camp is conducting its warfare: The pamphlet is supplied with a duplicate signature of Kruk and that of another anti-NPP crusader, possibly reproduced with the help of one of the real statements distributed earlier by the activists.

The text itself is a brainwashing rarity: "We, members of the Unified Gay Party, urge all gays, transvestites, and representatives of other sexual

minorities to support our picket against the construction of a nuclear power plant in the Ostrovets District. Screw eating two-tailed fish and three-headed cows! We are for the two-assed!"

It's unlikely that such a spin could hurt the activists in any significant way: Kruk is a well-known member of the Ostrovets community, a pensioner, and himself a retired law enforcement professional - a former investigator. Slapping a "gay label" on a person like that simply would not work, notwithstanding whether this should at all matter. "It's ok, we'll get through this," Kruk said, laughing. "We knew what we were stepping into." He said, however, that he had filed a complaint with the local prosecutor's office demanding to conduct an inquiry into the dissemination of falsified pamphlets bearing his name and to find and punish those responsible for it. There is, though, little trust in that law and order will prevail in this instance.

The sheer course of action undertaken by the NPP proponents is, in any case, astounding: Instead of arguing the issue at hand, they choose to portray the opposition as gays and transvestites. The very idea that it might help to resort to inciting homophobic sentiments in order to promote a nuclear power plant is plain despicable. Too bad that its perpetrators will likely remain unknown.

The signature collection campaign

Just how heart-felt the refusal to have a dangerous site in their backyard is on the part of Ostrovets residents is evidenced by the fact that even after the various attempts by the local authorities to thwart the anti-nuclear activities, after the KGB summons, and after the appearance of the fake leaflets with insulting innuendoes, the Anti-Nuclear Steering Committee is still holding together. Quite the opposite of giving in to the pressure, it keeps attracting new supporters. "Our core group now numbers around 15 people. But we are denied making statements in local newspapers, or taking part in meetings with workforce collectives where the authorities are agitating for the NPP," said Kruk.

As arguments against the NPP, the

statement lists the threat of an accident or a disaster prompted by an operational failure at the plant, a possible increase in cancer incidence caused by so-called "sanctioned" radiation discharges that a nuclear power plant releases even in the course of routine operation, the risk of another violent earthquake of the scale of the 1909 disaster (the 7.0 magnitude quake of 1909 was the strongest ever recorded in Belarus), and the dominant western winds, which would carry the radioactive fallout all over the country should an accident in fact take place.

The signature campaign and the vigorous anti-NPP activities in Ostrovets are something that is really putting the authorities on the spot: Official claims that Belarusians have long put Chernobyl behind them, made peace with the tragedy, and are in full support of the construction of a dangerous energy site, sound anything but credible.

The open statement is addressed to President Lukashenko, Prime Minister Sergei Sidorsky, European Union member countries, and a range of media outlets. A reaction has yet to come from the Belarusian government, but Lithuania has already stated it is bothered with the prospect of the new NPP operating in close proximity to its capital city.

On January 21, the Environment Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, the Seimas, held a meeting to discuss, among other items on the agenda, the issues associated with Belarus' plans to build its new nuclear power plant near the Lithuanian border. After brief reports by representatives of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of the Environment, Belarusian ecologist Yuras Meleshkevich - an envoy sent by Ostrovets residents to speak at the meeting - distributed copies of the open statement protesting the construction, complete with the 270 signatures that activists had by then collected in the district.

A press release published by The Anti-Nuclear Campaign of Belarus said at the time: "Residents of the Ostrovets District are voicing their objection that the decision-making on the placement

of the new plant has been carried out without their participation. They are continuing to collect signatures to defend their right to a favorable environment." "The local population in the Ostrovets District is very worried about the choice of site for the NPP construction, as this is an area of rich and beautiful nature, which attracts people for open-air pastime and recreation," said Meleshkevich as he handed copies of the Ostrovets statement to the Seimas members. The statement said, in particular: "We are appealing to all citizens of the Republic of Belarus and to the European community with one request - to stop the implementation of the 'Ostrovets NPP' project."

After the statement had been presented, Environment Committee chair Jonas Simonas said: "The information we have received from our Belarusian colleagues warrants careful examination. We will analyze the materials at hand and review this issue."

How viable is the project anyway?

Earlier official reports pegged the start of the construction at 2009. The first reactor block of the new nuclear power plant is projected to begin operation in 2016, and the next one in 2018. Even if the assumption that the choice has in fact been made to locate the plant in Ostrovets is true - there is, as yet, no confirmation from President Lukashenko, which means that the decision still awaits formal approval - one complication remains that Belarus, for now, lacks fundamental components that a project of this scale requires.

The government has yet to select an equipment supplier or even to announce a tender or any alternative procedure to choose one. The state is likewise hard-pressed to secure enough funds to finance construction works. The costs of building a nuclear power plant of a capacity of around 2 gigawatts may set the country's budget back by as much as EUR 5 billion to EUR 6 billion, which is no small amount.

Of course, there is always the expectation that the new NPP will be

another "present" to Belarus from Russia - which may simply build the plant for its neighbor and append the construction costs to the already gigantic debt sheet run up by the Belarusian government. One should hope, however, that at the time of a

raging financial and economic crisis, Russia would refrain from making such an expensive and, essentially, perilous gift.

Source: Bellona, 16 March 2009: "Belarus, Lithuania, and a nuclear

power plant in search of a solution" (slightly shortened by Nuclear Monitor)

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RECENT SASKATCHEWAN MINING ACTIVITIES AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Under pressure from the Canadian Government there have been some internal changes and administrative reorganization at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC). This will mean that new nuclear projects may not have to undergo public scrutiny in environmental assessments (EA). This, coupled with the Canadian Government's changes in the Federal Environmental Protection Act, will limit or even eliminate environmental assessments, eliminate public participation, and speed up the licensing process.

(686.5945) **Jim Penna** - These changes were made by the Federal Government likely because of pressure by the nuclear industry to shorten the time in obtaining licenses. There was no due process or public input before these changes were made. This does not bode well for effective oversight of the nuclear industry in Canada.

There has been an explosion in uranium exploration in Northern Saskatchewan. However due to the economic slowdown and falling uranium prices there has been a suspension of work at new sites. Areva has stated that it is not economical at the present time to mine these ore bodies. The company has requested authorization to include the ongoing care and maintenance activities at the Midwest Project site, currently authorized under a separate license, under the existing McLean license. Areva is also requesting the revocation of its Uranium Mine Site Preparation License for the Midwest Project.

Although verbal assurance has been given by a CNSC official that once Areva applies to mine the Midwest site this will trigger an EA, it will not be known until it actually happens. A lot will depend on how the new regulations are applied. Also, Areva has recently

announced the layoff of 100 workers at the Caribou deposit at its McClean Lake site.

In order for Cameco to pursue its plan to recycle wastes from its Blind River refinery and Port Hope conversion plant to the Key Lake site, CNSC has ordered Cameco to upgrade its milling process to stop or minimize the release of selenium and molybdenum which has caused contamination as far as ten kilometers down stream from the site. These high levels of release coupled with faulty tailings management facilities at Key Lake is also forcing Cameco to recycle the contents and lining of its tailing pits and rebuild them by 2013. These are the tailings management facilities that are supposed to last forever!

A new Saskatchewan Government Industrial Reclamation Act sets out the procedure for old mine sites to be returned to provincial jurisdiction. At the present time a number of smaller uranium mine sites have become the responsibility of the province. However, many mines around Uranium City are still not cleaned up. A study is underway to establish the best approach for dealing with the abandoned Gunnar mines, closed in

1964, which have become the responsibility of the Province of Saskatchewan. Some mitigation measure will likely be taken, however, given the careless manner of mining and the length of time that these sites have been left alone, it will be impossible to make the sites safe. Beaverlodge, which is still being decommissioned by Cameco, is reported to be continually contaminating nearby water bodies and the land with dangerous radioactive materials. According to a CNSC report, radium 226 has been contaminating the environment for 56 years and will continue to do so for the next 100 years! Areva is presently decommissioning the Cluff Lake mining site in preparation for returning the site to provincial jurisdiction.

The right wing Saskatchewan Government has clearly stated its desire to proceed with value added nuclear activities in the province. This includes almost every link of the nuclear chain and perhaps military nuclear research. The Saskatchewan Provincial Government recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with INL (Idaho National Laboratories in the USA) which is engaged in military nuclear research.

U-mining ban in British Columbia. Meanwhile, in another Canadian province, the British Columbia government has issued a retroactive cabinet order to ban permits for uranium and thorium exploration and development in the province. On March 13, the B.C. Lieutenant-Governor signed a March 11, cabinet decision giving the Chief Mines Inspector of B.C. the legal authority to not issue exploration and development permits for uranium and thorium in British Columbia. This new law prevents comes from an Amendment to the

Environment & Land Use Act and strengthens the April 2008 B.C. exploration "Reserve" which had a loophole grand fathering one of the most likely uranium deposits to be developed near Kelowna. "Protesting did work for us as the government did not want us rallying at ski resorts etc, especially this year with the Winter Olympics at Vancouver next February!"

Source: e-mail: Peter Chataway, Uranium Free B.C. Coalition

A Uranium Development Partnership Panel was appointed by the Saskatchewan Government to make recommendations on value added uranium projects in the province. The twelve-member committee includes the CEO's of Areva, Cameco, and Bruce Power. Also the so-called environmentalist is none other than Patrick Moore! (See Nuclear Monitor 655: "Moore nuclear spin") They could not find an environmentalist from Saskatchewan that would sit on this stacked panel! This panel was granted three million Canadian dollars to prepare their report.

Bruce Power, partly owned by Cameco, has been aggressively promoting nuclear power plants both in Northern Alberta and in Saskatchewan along the North Saskatchewan River any where from Lloydminster through North Battleford to Prince Albert. Folks living in communities along the river are alarmed and organizing to oppose any such development. Several meetings in Paradise Hill, Shellbrook, and North Battleford attracted over 800 people to hear Dr. Jim Harding, the author of *Canada's Deadly Secret, Saskatchewan uranium and the global nuclear system, 2007*. In Paradise Hill a group was formed called S.O.S. - Save

Our Saskatchewan. There is a growing movement of grass roots organizations and individuals known as the Coalition for a Clean Green Saskatchewan (www.cleangreensask.ca) to not only oppose nuclear reactors in Saskatchewan but also to oppose any and all so called value added nuclear industries in the province.

Source: Dr. Jim Penna / WISE Uranium Project website

Contact: Dr. Jim Penna, Inter Church Uranium Committee Educational Co-operative (ICUCEC), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.
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IN BRIEF

Norway: New report on hypothetical Sellafield accident. On 23 March, the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority published a report on the possible consequences for Norway of an atmospheric release of radioactivity from the storage tanks for highly active liquid waste at Sellafield. The report shows that an accident could entail considerable fallout over Norway. The release of just 1% of the tanks' contents could result in levels of radioactive fallout in Western Norway that are five times higher than those measured in the worst affected areas of Norway after the Chernobyl accident.

If an accident caused the release of 10% of the tanks' contents, it is calculated that the fallout would be 50 times the maximum level experienced in Norway after Chernobyl. A major accident is of course considered to be less likely than more limited releases. However, the British authorities have not provided Norway with any specific information indicating that such an incident can be ruled out.

The report considers an accident involving the storage tanks for highly active liquid waste. These currently contain about 1000 m3 of radioactive waste from several decades of reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel.

Norway would be vulnerable in the event of a large release of radioactivity from Sellafield, both because of its geographical position and because of the prevailing weather conditions. The impacts of a major atmospheric release could be particularly severe. The Norwegian authorities consider that in the worst case, an accident at Sellafield could have significant impacts on agriculture, the environment and society for decades to come.

Ministry of the Environment (Norway), 26 March 2009

Australia: Queensland: The return of an anti-uranium state government. *PULL down the bunting, recork the champagne, throw out the sausage rolls -- there will be no celebration party for the Queensland uranium players. Labor is back. There will be no uranium mining for at least the next three years...* so began a report in the conservative daily newspaper The Australian shortly after the recent Queensland state election. Uranium mining emerged as an issue in the 21st March election with the incumbent Labor party pledging to retain its long standing ban on mining while the conservative Liberal National Party (LNP) threw its weight behind an open slather mining policy. The Greens committed to legislate against the industry and ruled out any preference deals with the LNP on the back of their uranium policy. The uranium industry lobbied hard in the lead up to election and mobilized considerable media support for its spurious claims of employment and revenue benefits. National and state environment groups worked to keep the issue live and publicly rated the various party's performance and promises against a range of issues, including their position on uranium mining. The return of an anti-uranium state government has been welcomed by campaigners as an important development in the continuing and very active national uranium debate.

Dave Sweeney, email, 29 March 2009

France: cancer-figures temporarily workers are increasing. In February, a man perished at a building site at the nuclear reactor in Paluel, France. This was not given much attention, because he was "only" a temporary worker. There are 20,000 temporary contractors working in nuclear power stations in France. Without them, reactors would not keep going or get repaired. A confidential report by EDF reveals that 84% of the subcontractors in the nuclear industry would like to quit because of bad working conditions. Safety measures are minimal, and the employees are under enormous pressure since every day the reactor is offline (because of maintenance, for instance) costs EDF 1 million Euro's. Research by the Centre International de recherche sur le cancer shows that while temporary workers get 80% of the radiation, the employees of EDF get 20%. The group of EDF employees show an increase in cancer of "only" 8%, the subcontractors 40%.

Siné Hebdo (Fr.), 18 March 2009

No new IAEA-DG, yet. The IAEA Board again is inviting governments to nominate candidates for Director General. Neither of the two candidates that the Board voted upon on March 26, received the necessary two-thirds majority of votes during successive rounds of secret balloting. The Board's Chair - Algerian Ambassador Taous Feroukhi noted that in accordance with the Board's agreed procedure, the slate of candidates is considered to have been wiped clean. She said she will again be inviting Member State governments to nominate candidates on 30 March 2009, with nominations to be submitted within four weeks thereafter. The Board voted on two candidates - Ambassador Yukiya Amano of Japan, and Ambassador Abdul Samad Minty of South Africa. Under the Board's agreed procedure, either or both of these candidates can be re-nominated by Member States.

The Director General is appointed by the Board of Governors with the approval of the General Conference for a term of four years. IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei's term of office expires on 30 November 2009. He has served as Director General since 1997. (see also: Nuclear Monitor 685, Briefs)

IAEA Staff Report, 27 March 2009

Too little too late: Financial compensation for French test victims. The French government says it will pay out at least 10 million euros (US\$13.6 million), initially for one year, to people with health problems as a result of French nuclear tests carried out in the Algerian Sahara and in Polynesia, Defense Minister Herve Morin was quoted as saying on Tuesday, March 24. Some 150,000 people are estimated to have been affected.

France tested its first nuclear bomb on February 13, 1960 in the Algerian Sahara. Between 1960 and 1996, France carried out a total of 210 nuclear tests in Algeria, French Polynesia and the Pacific Ocean. Participants in the tests and people living in areas close to the testing zones have long complained of health problems including leukemia and other forms of cancer. France has for a long time refused to officially recognize a link between its testing of nuclear bombs and health complaints reported by both military and civilian staff involved in the tests.

Compensation in other countries:

Russia: Test veterans get a medal, pension, pride of place in parades and use of a special radiation hospital.

China: announced last year that military and civilian veterans would get pensions.

U.S.A.: Ronald Reagan introduced a compensation deal (the 'Radiation Exposure Compensation Act') in 1990 which has since paid out a total of US\$1.4 billion.

Australia/New Zealand: Veterans with any illnesses known to be caused by radiation are entitled to subsidized private medical care.

U.K.: Government still insists veterans were not harmed and denies any responsibility.

AP, 24 March 2009 / Sunday Mirror (UK), 29 March 2009

India: first uranium delivery from France.

Following clearance by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, first batch of 60 tons uranium ore concentrate imported from Areva NC France was received on March 31, by the Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad, India. This uranium ore would be processed and used in pressurized heavy water reactors (PHWRs) in India.

India and France had entered into an accord for supplying reactors and fuel consequent to the Indo-US nuclear deal, the 123 agreement. As a first step, Department of Atomic Energy had entered into a contract with French Nuclear supplier AR EVA NC for the supply of 300 tons of uranium ore concentrate

www.Samaylive.com 31 March & 1 April 2009

Australia; Ranger: The controversial Ranger uranium mine inside the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park in Australia's Northern Territory is again under scrutiny following confirmation of the extent of a long standing and unresolved seepage problem at the operations main tailings dam. In February the Supervising Scientist, a federal agency set up to monitor the impacts of Ranger, confirmed the existence and extent of the seepage problem to a parliamentary Senate hearing. Around 100,000 litres of contaminant is leaking in an uncontrolled fashion from the dam every day. Australian environmental and anti-nuclear groups have been active in highlighting this and a series of other operational failures at Ranger in the national media. The timing of the leak has been highly embarrassing to mine operator Energy Resources of Australia (ERA - 68% owned by resource giant Rio Tinto) as the company has just applied for federal approval for a major expansion of the aging mine. ERA are seeking approval to build a new tailings dam and a large scale acid heap leaching facility to process low grade ore and waste rock stockpiles. The company has further flagged plans to construct an underground shaft from the base of the current open pit operation to exploit a lens of uranium ore that runs towards the Magela floodplain, a pivotal component of Kakadu's unique wetlands environment. The expansion plans have been fiercely opposed by ERA's critics who are calling on the federal government to veto the move and initiate an independent inquiry into the performance and environmental and social impacts of Australia's oldest uranium mine.

Dave Sweeney, 28 March 2009

Quote of the month: "We have continued to see incidents over the last few years that indicate that safety culture was not a priority through all the staff at all the plants,"

NRC Chairman Dale Klein, 10 March, at the 21 annual Regulatory Information Conference of the *U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission* (NRC) cited in *Nucleonics Week*, 19 March 2009

The NUCLEAR MONITOR

The Nuclear Information & Resource Service was founded in 1978 and is based in Takoma Park, Maryland. The World Information Service on Energy was set up the same year and is housed in Amsterdam, Netherlands. NIRS and WISE Amsterdam joined forces in 2000, creating a worldwide network of information and resource centers for citizens and environmental organizations concerned about nuclear power, radioactive waste, radiation, and sustainable energy.

The Nuclear Monitor publishes international information in English 20 times a year. A Spanish translation of this newsletter is available on the WISE Amsterdam website (www.antenna.nl/wise/esp). A Russian version is published by WISE Russia, a Ukrainian version is published by WISE Ukraine (available at www.nirs.org). Back issues are available through the WISE Amsterdam homepage: www.antenna.nl/wise and at www.nirs.org.

Receiving the Nuclear Monitor

US and Canadian readers should contact NIRS to obtain the Nuclear Monitor (address see page 11). Subscriptions are \$35/yr for individuals and \$250/year for institutions.

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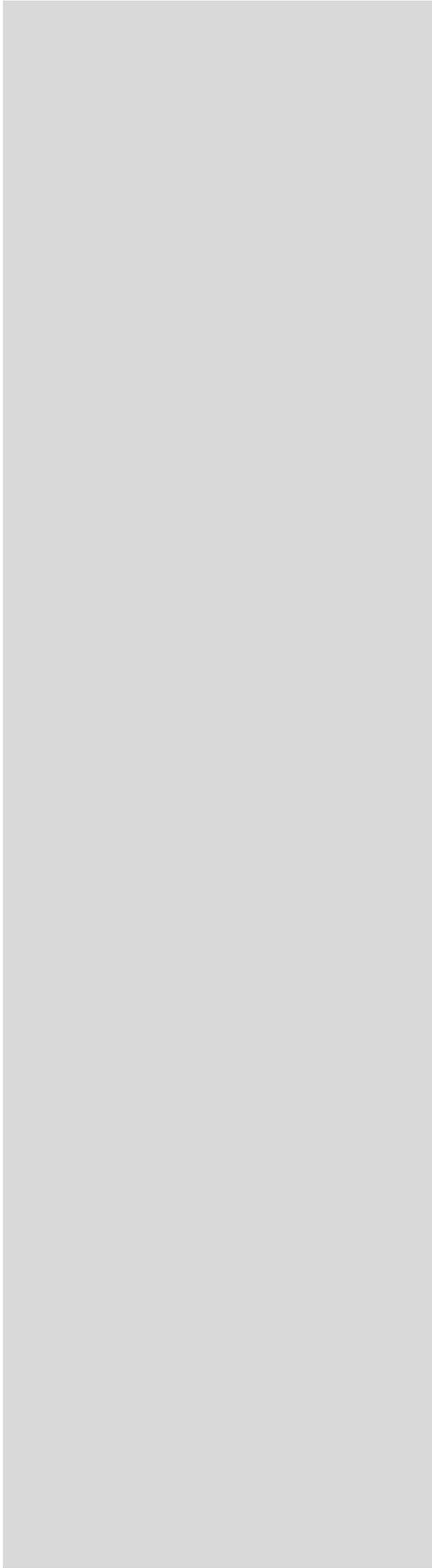
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