

ITER Forum Website Update 9&10.2011

B.J.Green (11/10/11)

1. Nuclear plans persist despite Fukushima

BY:

ROBIN BROMBY

From:

The Australian August 22, 2011 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/business/opinion/nuclear-plans-persist-despite-fukushima/story-e6frg9ex-1226119217497>

HOKKAIDO Electric Power has been given government permission to put back into full commercial operation its Unit 3 at the Tomari nuclear power station on Japan's northern island.

It is the first reactor to pass the stress tests imposed after the Fukushima accident. While Japan is unlikely to commission any new nuclear projects, Tomari is positive news for the nuclear industry.

While the Japanese, Germans, Swiss and Italians have gone into a nuclear funk, it's a case of "praise the Lord and pass the yellowcake" elsewhere.

Russia is testing its recently completed Kalinin nuclear plant, Lithuania is short-listing suppliers for a huge nuclear plant, while the United Arab Emirates is letting main contracts for its first nuclear complex.

Since the Fukushima panic, three new reactors have been commissioned (in China, India and Pakistan). The Chinese, notwithstanding lip-service about safety, are still full steam ahead.

Meanwhile, here in Australia the industry is a little down in the mouth. The uranium spot price has fallen from a little over \$US70/lb earlier this year to \$US50.50/lb, which is not enough to justify development of many projects unless they are planning to use low-cost in-situ leaching (pumping fluid

downhole to bring the uranium to the surface).

It is dog days for the sector. Take a random sample of listed uranium stocks and you will find very low key activity, with few announcements other than quarterly reports and other regulatory requirements.

So it was a real tonic on Thursday to see a 11.7 per cent pop (with good volume) in the share price of Toro Energy (TOE) after it announced a large uranium mineralised system at its Theseus prospect, part of its Lake Mackay project. The company's other project, Wiluna, is scheduled for first production in late 2013.

Toro's bounce was a welcome sign the uranium sector still has a pulse. Toro is helped by the fact that it has a substantial swag of shareholders in places such as Zurich and Hong Kong who are in for the long haul and, unlike some local punters, not easily scared.

Also on a positive note, Aura Energy (AEE) shares seem to have steadied. Over the past year they have risen from 15.2c to 56c in February, then eased to 19c in June, but appear now to have found support at around the 30c level after recent good results from the Haggan project in Sweden.

If it wasn't for the state of the markets, you would normally have expected a reasonable investor response this morning. Aura is in a trading halt and will this morning announce a significant increase in its Swedish uranium resources.

Another company to watch is Manhattan Corp (MHC) because it's run by Alan Eggers, the man who built Summit Resources (SMM), a company that has 34,000 tonnes of uranium still sitting in the ground and not able to be touched thanks to the intransigence and obduracy of the Queensland government.

Manhattan, fortunately, has its main project in Western Australia where uranium sanity has returned.

The Ponton deposit is amenable to in-situ leaching. Eggers is having a meeting this week as part of the process of getting ministerial approval to start drill-testing to significantly increase its existing contained 7800-tonne inferred resource.

Manhattan has fallen from \$1.44 in January to 32c now.

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The writer implies no investment recommendation and this report contains material that is speculative in nature. Investors should seek professional investment advice. The writer does not own shares in any company mentioned

2. Fukushima's radioactive sea contamination lingers

New Scientist Environment

30 September 2011 by **Andy Coghlan**

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn20990-fukushimas-radioactive-sea-contamination-lingers.html>

Levels of radiation in the sea off the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear plant remain stubbornly high six months after [the earthquake and tsunami struck Japan on 11 March](#).

After levels peaked at around 100,000 becquerels per cubic metre of seawater in early April, much of the radioactive iodine, caesium and plutonium from Fukushima was expected to rapidly disperse in the Pacific Ocean.

Instead, it seems that the levels remain high. That could be because contaminated water is still leaking into the sea from the nuclear plant, because currents are trapping the material that's already there, or both.

[Ken Buesseler](#) of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Massachusetts, has told *The New York Times* that he has received samples of seawater taken in July from near the plant that contained 10,000 becquerels per cubic metre. The corresponding level last year, only months before the disaster, was just 1.5 becquerels, he says.

[Simon Boxall](#), an oceanographer at the University of Southampton, UK, says that much of the radioactive material will still be sinking down to the seabed

and being absorbed by marine life.

Current trap

Boxall says that a strong ocean current called the [kuroshio](#) – the Japanese equivalent of the Atlantic Gulf Stream – may be responsible for the persistence of the radiation.

The kuroshio skirts the Japanese seaboard, sweeping material into the deep ocean. But closer to shore, it creates huge eddies 80 to 100 kilometres across, which may send the material back towards the shore instead of dispersing it.

In June, Buesseler took his own samples off the coast of Japan. He wants to have his findings analysed before publishing them, but at present they suggest Boxall may be right: further out to sea, from 30 to 600 kilometres offshore, the radiation threat drops off.

It's not surprising that sea life hasn't yet swept up the radioactive material, says Boxall. Seaweed tends to accumulate radioactive iodine-131, which rapidly decays, he says – but caesium-134 and caesium 137, with half-lives of two and 30 years respectively, accumulate in shellfish and could persist for decades. "There's no reason to think it would drop so soon after the disaster," he says.

Peak leaks

Official estimates from the Japanese government and TEPCO, the company that owns Fukushima-Daiichi, suggest that 3500 terabecquerels of caesium-137 from the plant entered the ocean between 11 March and late May. The pollution was exacerbated in April by [problems locating a persistent leak of contaminated water](#) and a decision by TEPCO to [dump contaminated water at sea](#). A further 10,000 terabecquerels of caesium-137 is thought to have found its way into the ocean after escaping as steam from the facility. And TEPCO said last week that Fukushima-Daiichi may still be leaking as much as 500 tonnes of contaminated water into the sea every day.

"It wouldn't surprise me if there is still caesium entering the sea off Fukushima, but it can't be as bad as in March and April," says Richard

Wakeford of the University of Manchester, UK.

"The important thing is to keep monitoring to understand what's happening, and particularly to keep an eye on levels in seafood," he says. "The reports I've seen suggest that there isn't an immediate problem with seafood contamination, but it is important to maintain a comprehensive monitoring programme."

Dirty soil

There have also been significant developments this week in Japan's plans to cope with land and soil contaminated by [airborne pollution from the reactors](#), mainly released in explosions and fires in March and April.

On Tuesday, the Japanese environment ministry said that [about 30 million cubic metres of contaminated soil and vegetation from around Fukushima prefecture](#) may need to be disposed of – 23 times the volume of the iconic [Tokyo Dome](#) baseball stadium in the capital. The volume is so high because an expert panel recommended that 5 centimetres of topsoil should be shaved off contaminated areas, mainly farmland, but also including forested and residential areas.

A day later, the ministry unveiled a plan to build temporary storage facilities for the soil [in eight prefectures in different parts of Japan](#).

Meanwhile there was good news this week from Fukushima-Daiichi itself. TEPCO reported on Wednesday that for the first time since the disaster on 11 March, the temperatures of [all three of the most severely damaged reactor units had fallen below 100 °C](#) – a key step towards the goal of cold shutdown, which will effectively mothball the reactors for good.

The final reactor to fall below 100 °C was unit 2, the source of much of the leaked water in April.

3. Flawed Green Scheme Costs Households £120 In Energy Bills

Friday, 26 August 2011 21:48 Tim Webb, The Times

<http://www.thegwpf.org/uk-news/3713-flawed-green-scheme-costs-households-p120.html>

Every household in Britain has been overcharged an estimated £120 in utility bills as a result of an environmental initiative that is not working, an investigation by The Times has found.

Energy companies such as Scottish Power, EDF Energy and Centrica, the owner of British Gas, have pocketed about £9 billion in free windfall profits by manipulating a carbon trading scheme. The extra costs have come when energy prices are at a record high, but, according to the climate change group Sandbag, the total carbon emissions saved by the scheme are roughly equivalent to every person in Europe replacing two old incandescent lightbulbs with energy-efficient alternatives, costing about £3 each.

Jenny Saunders, the chief executive of the NEA fuel poverty campaign group, called on the energy regulator Ofgem to re-examine the scheme. “People don’t understand where these additional charges from their suppliers are coming from,” she said.

When in 2005 Britain joined the European Union emissions scheme — the world’s first carbon-trading initiative — it was hailed as the cheapest and most effective way of tackling climate change. It requires heavy polluters, such as factories and coal power plants, to hold permits for each tonne of carbon they emit.

If companies want to emit more carbon than their allocation of permits allows, they have to buy spare permits on the open market.

By putting a price on carbon in this way for the first time, the hope was that companies would become more energy-efficient, and cleaner ways of generating electricity would be encouraged.

During the first few years, heavy polluters were handed the majority of their “permits to pollute” free, in a deliberate attempt to reduce costs and prevent the energy industry from blocking the scheme. But companies have been secretly passing on the “cost” of these free permits to consumers since the initiative began, justifying the move by arguing that they have an intrinsic market value.

Industry experts say that it is an open secret that companies are passing on this

“opportunity cost” to consumers, despite electricity bills running at a record annual average of £475 per household.

Richard Hall, energy expert at Consumer Focus, said: “The EU [scheme] hasn’t been very successful and hasn’t shown good value for money for consumers. Many generators will have had a free windfall at the expense of higher costs for consumers.”

The industry refuses to acknowledge the practice in public. David Porter, chief executive of the British power station trade body, the Association of Electricity Producers, said: “I’m absolutely confident that there is no wrongdoing.”

Stig Schjølset, analyst from the energy research company Point Carbon, said: “Power generators are still passing on the full ‘opportunity cost’ of using up free permits to consumers. For them it’s a straightforward windfall.” He added that policymakers responsible for devising the scheme “seemed a bit surprised” when companies took advantage of free allocations.

4. September 2011 Last updated at 04:34 GMT

UK joins laser nuclear fusion project

By Jason Palmer

Science and technology reporter, BBC News

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-14842720>

The UK has formally joined forces with a US laser lab in a bid to develop clean energy from nuclear fusion.

Unlike fission plants, the process uses lasers to compress atomic nuclei until they join, releasing energy.

The National Ignition Facility (Nif) in the US is drawing closer to producing a surplus of energy from the idea.

The UK company AWE and the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory have now joined with Nif to help make laser fusion a viable commercial energy source.

At a **meeting this week sponsored by the Institute of Physics** and held at London's Royal Society, a memorandum of understanding was announced between the three facilities.

The meeting attracted scientists and industry members in an effort to promote wider UK involvement with the technology that would be required to make laser fusion energy plants possible.

"This is an absolutely classic example of the connections between really high-grade theoretical scientific research, business and commercial opportunities, and of course a fundamental human need: tackling pressures that we're all familiar with on our energy supply," said David Willetts, the UK's science minister.

The idea of harvesting energy from nuclear fusion is an old one.

The UK has a long heritage in a different approach to accomplishing the same goal, which uses magnetic fields; it is home to the Joint European Torus (JET), the largest such magnetic facility in the world and a testing ground for ITER, the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor.

But magnetic fusion attempts have in recent years met **more and more constricting budget concerns**, just as NIF was nearing completion.

Part of the problem has been that the technical ability to reach "breakeven" - the point at which more energy is produced than is consumed - has always seemed distant. Detractors of the idea have asserted that "fusion energy is 50 years away, no matter what year you ask".

But Mr Willetts told the meeting that was changing.

"I think that what's going on both in the UK and in the US shows that we are now making significant progress on this technology," he said. "It can't any longer be dismissed as something on the far distant horizon."

The Rutherford Appleton Lab is where the idea of fusion energy was first proved, and both that laboratory and the AWE play host to high-intensity lasers that can act as proving grounds for future technology.

Ignition keys

The laser fusion idea uses pellets of fuel made of isotopes of hydrogen called deuterium and tritium. A number of lasers are fired at the pellets in order to compress the fuel to just hundredths of its starting size.

In the process, the hydrogen nuclei fuse to create helium and fast-moving subatomic particles called neutrons whose energy, in the form of heat, can be captured and used for the comparatively old-fashioned idea of driving a steam turbine.

Giant laser experiment powers up

The aim is to achieve "ignition" of the fuel for which Nif is named - a self-sustaining fusion reaction that would far surpass breakeven.

Nif's director Ed Moses told the meeting that ignition was drawing ever nearer.

"Our goal is to have ignition within the next couple of years," he said.

"We've done fusion at fairly high levels already. Even on Sunday night, we did the highest fusion yield that has ever been done."

Dr Moses said that a single shot from the Nif's laser - the largest in the world - released a million billion neutrons and produced for a tiny fraction of a second more power than the world was consuming.

But for ignition, that number would need to rise by about a factor of 1,000.

The UK leads the High-Power Laser Energy Research (Hiper), a pan-European project begun in 2005 to move laser fusion technology toward a commercial plant.

"We recognised several years ago with Nif... and the ignition that was likely to occur, that the profile of fusion would be raised," said John Collier, the director of Hiper.

"We were thinking: 'what would be a way forward, how could Europe define a strategic route for laser power production to take advantage of these developments?' And that was the kernel of Hiper."

Both Hiper and Life, a similar effort at Nif, estimate that a functioning laser power plant would need to cycle through more than 10 fuel pellets each second - a million each day. Nif, since its completion in 2009, has undertaken only 305 such shots in its quest for ignition.

Professor Collier said the technological challenges that presented were incredible opportunities.

"The BMW plant in Oxford is producing one Mini a minute - you think of the complexity of that and you wouldn't think that's possible," he said.

"But these are tractable things; Lego bricks, bullets - these things are made in huge quantities and there are huge intellectual property opportunities for those people, those industries that get in."

5. Project Status – 2011

A monthly update of progress on the [National Ignition Campaign](#).

https://lasers.llnl.gov/newsroom/project_status/2011/september.php

September

NIC Team Achieves Record Neutron Yield and Laser Energy

The National Ignition Campaign (NIC) team continued to set records for neutron yield and laser energy during September. On September 9, the NIC team fired the sixth National Ignition Facility shot using cryogenic layered deuterium-tritium (DT) fuel. All 192 beams delivered 1.43 megajoules of ultraviolet laser energy into the hohlraum. The initial neutron yield estimate was about 6×10^{14} (600 trillion), a new high. Because of the expected high neutron yield, sensitive equipment such as the Target Alignment Sensor (TAS) was removed from the Target Bay prior to the shot to protect it from potentially damaging radiation.

Then at 10:46 AM on September 15, all 192 NIF beams fired 1.606 megajoules of ultraviolet laser light into a hohlraum containing a cryogenically layered DT fuel capsule. This shot represented the highest laser energy ever fired on a target. Preliminary data indicated that the experiment produced an areal density of compressed fuel well over 1 gm/cm² for the first time under laboratory conditions. Areal density (ρr) is

a measure of the combined thickness and density of the fuel shell around an igniting target and is an important factor in the configuration of the fuel needed for obtaining ignition and burn in an inertial confinement fusion experiment (see [June 2011 Photons & Fusion Newsletter](#)).

Testing the 'Three-Color' Tuning Scheme

On the morning of Sept. 5, the NIC team fired the fifth NIF shot using cryogenic layered DT fuel in an experiment designed to test the three-wavelength approach to tuning hohlraum energy distribution. Using a third wavelength provides a greater level of control of the laser energy distribution and coupling in the hohlraum and could reduce energy losses, thus increasing the radiation energy in the hohlraum while maintaining good implosion symmetry (see [November 2010 Photons & Fusion Newsletter](#)).

In the shot, 192 beams delivered 1.44 megajoules of ultraviolet laser energy into the hohlraum with good energy and power balance. All target diagnostics acquired data, and the estimated neutron yield was about 5×10^{14} (500 trillion).

Neutron Imager Calibration Experiment

The NIC team conducted a polar direct-drive experiment to measure the uniformity of response to neutrons over the scintillator of the Neutron Imager diagnostic on Sept. 25. All 192 beams delivered 342 kilojoules of ultraviolet light to a glass balloon over-coated with plastic and filled with deuterium-tritium gas. The shot produced a yield of 5×10^{13} (50 trillion) neutrons. The Neutron Imager, developed jointly by Los Alamos National Laboratory and LLNL, provides information about the size and shape of the neutron-emitting region as well as the areal density of fuel in the various regions of the capsule implosion.

6. October 3, 2011 2:59 pm

Power generation: Energy plans require PR and fat purses

By Jude Weber

<http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d342a236-e837-11e0-9fc7-00144feab49a.html#axzz1aSdssane>

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Rich in the raw materials to produce clean energy but poor in fossil fuels, Chile's mounting power problems look easy to solve.

The world's top copper producing nation needs to double energy supplies within a decade to keep up with economic growth. The need to update electricity transmission lines was also underlined by a big power outage in late September affecting nearly 60 per cent of the population.

However, updating and increasing power supplies will require PR, tactful diplomacy and deep pockets.

Although Chile's neighbours, Peru and Bolivia, have vast gas resources and the advantage of proximity, border tensions lingering from a 19th century war in the case of Bolivia, and a row over maritime limits with Peru, mean both options are off the agenda.

Argentina, across the Andes mountains, used to be Chile's sole supplier of natural gas, but it turned off the taps in 2007-08, after the government decided to redirect the gas to meet soaring domestic demand stoked by artificially low prices.

Nuclear power is not an option – public opinion has hardened since the [Fukushima disaster in Japan](#). This is hardly surprising, since Chile is a highly seismic country and last year suffered one of the world's most powerful earthquakes and a tsunami.

That leaves as options liquefied natural gas (LNG) and coal, more hydroelectric power, or renewable sources such as geothermal, wind, wave and solar energy. Each is problematic, but none more so than harnessing the power of the nation's powerful southern rivers.

Hydroelectric power accounts for about a third of Chile's energy, while fossil fuels make up nearly two-thirds, according to the Rodrigo Alvarez, the energy minister.

The government of Sebastián Piñera has backed plans by electricity generators Colbún and Endesa to build five

hydro-electric plants at a cost of more than \$3.2bn, on two picture postcard rivers in the pristine region of Patagonia.

The HidroAysén project is expected to generate 2,750MW of power by 2025, boosting by a quarter the capacity of the main SIC electricity grid that serves 90 per cent of population.

Ecologists are scandalised and some 30,000 people took to the streets in mid-May after the project won environmental approval. Riot police with tear gas were deployed to break up the biggest demonstrations in recent memory – that is, until student protests erupted shortly afterwards.

The project is now on hold, pending legal challenges but Daniel Fernández, executive vice-president of HidroAysén, says: “By the end of the year, we expect it all to be approved. It is clear this project is necessary.”

Even if the power plants get the green light, a colossal battle is looming over the 1,927km of pylons to deliver the power from the plants on the Baker and Pascua rivers to the grid.

HidroAysén points out that the towers are about a third of the size of wind turbines, but ecologists are already running an emotive campaign showing pylons in front of images of outstandingly beautiful Chilean landscapes – including some, such as the Torres del Paine mountains, which are nowhere near the project.

It is a classic situation of both sides being right: HidroAysén will indeed have an environmental impact, though the company says the area to be flooded is less than a 10th of the size of the Belo Monte dam in Brazil, and generation will be among the most efficient in the world.

And it will be an eyesore, though the trade-off is cheap, clean power as Chile seeks to become a high-income country.

While the HidroAysén battle has been raging, 20 coal-fired plants, the dirtiest of all energy sources, were approved without any opposition, according to brokerage Larraín Vial.

“Without HidroAysén the lights won’t go off in Chile, but what will happen is what always has – thermal power plants will be built. Chile will continue to be dependent on expensive, environmentally unfriendly energy from abroad,” says Mr Fernández.

He calls it an “aberration” that two-thirds of power comes from

gas, coal or diesel “in a country that has practically no gas or coal”. Chile has built two LNG facilities, one of which, in the north, serves the mining industry, after Argentine gas was switched off. But analysts say it is paying some \$13.5 per million British thermal units for LNG, more than triple the US reference price, in part because LNG has to make a big detour to get to Chile.

Which leaves renewable fuels. The government is committed to generating 10 per cent of the country’s electricity from “green” sources by 2024.

“We are willing to study more ambitious goals,” says Mr Alvarez. But aside from small hydro projects, which count as renewable if they generate less than 20MW, other renewable sources are embryonic and costly.

And Chile needs an extra 8,000MW by 2020. “We face an immense challenge,” says the minister.

7. Chinese sceptics see global warming as US conspiracy

John Garnaut

October 8, 2011

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/chinese-sceptics-see-global-warming-as-us-conspiracy-20111007-11d11.html>

Chinese sceptics see global warming as US conspiracy

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Winds of change ... workers on site in Wuzhong country. *Photo: Reuters*

BEIJING: It's not only Western leaders like Julia Gillard and Barack Obama who face fierce resistance from climate sceptics as they try to lay out policies to tackle global warming.

In China, where carbon emissions have surged despite tough government constraints and targets, President Hu Jintao is having to stare down claims that human-induced climate change is an elaborate American conspiracy.

"Global warming is a bogus proposition," says Zhang Musheng, one of China's most influential intellectuals and a close adviser to a powerful and hawkish general in the People's Liberation Army, Liu Yuan.

8. Iran reactor disaster warning from whistleblower

by:
Martin Fletcher
From:
The Times October 08, 2011 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/iran-reactor-disaster-warning-from-whistleblower/story-e6frg6so-1226161555229>

IRAN'S first nuclear power station is unsafe and will probably cause a "tragic disaster" according to a document apparently written by an Iranian whistleblower.

The Bushehr reactor is likely to cause the next nuclear catastrophe after Chernobyl and Fukushima, says the document, passed to The Times by a reputable source and attributed to a former member of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran's legal department.

It claims Bushehr, which began operating last month after 35 years of intermittent construction, was built by "second-class engineers" who bolted together Russian and German technology from different eras; that it sits in one of the world's most seismically active areas but could not withstand a major earthquake; and that it has "no serious training program" or a contingency plan for accidents.

The document's authenticity cannot be confirmed, but nuclear experts see no reason to doubt it. It also echoes fears in the nuclear industry about the safety of a secretive project to which few outsiders have had access. Iran is

the only country with a nuclear plant that has not joined the Convention on Nuclear Safety, which obliges signatories to observe international safety standards.

Sami Alfaraj, head of the Kuwait Centre for Strategic Studies and an adviser to the Kuwaiti government, said an accident at Bushehr would be a "total calamity for the world", in which nuclear contamination would spew across a wide region.

He could not assess Bushehr's safety because Iran's co-operation with its neighbours had been "nil".

"They say trust us, but there's no such thing as trust us in nuclear politics. They are playing Russian roulette not just with us but with the world."

Bushehr began in 1975 when the shah of Iran awarded the contract to Kraftwerk Union of Germany.

When the German company pulled out after the 1979 Islamic revolution the two reactors were far from finished, and they were damaged during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88.

Airstrikes left the containment vessel with 1700 holes, letting in hundreds of tonnes of rainwater.

The regime revived the project in the 1990s, but with one reactor only. It wanted a prestige project to show that the Islamic Republic could match the scientific achievements of the West.

It may also have wanted cover for its nuclear weapons program - and the opportunities for personal enrichment the project gave Iran's elite. This time, Iran used Russian engineers, who had not built a foreign reactor since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989. Russia's experts wanted to start from scratch. The Iranians, having already spent more than \$US1 billion, insisted they built on the German foundations.

This involved adapting a structure built for a vertical German reactor to take a horizontal Russian reactor - an unprecedented operation. Of the 80,000

pieces of German equipment, many were corroded or lacked manuals.

Moscow's Centre for Energy and Security Studies, an independent think tank, identified a "shortage of skilled Russian engineering and construction specialists with suitable experience". It spoke of "frequent problems with quality and deadlines" as "every (Russian) subcontractor tried to milk the Bushehr project for all it's worth". In February a 30-year-old German cooling pump broke, sending metal debris into the system.

9. German anger at Polish nuclear plant on border

by:
David Charter
From:

The Australian October 08, 2011 12:00AM

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/german-anger-at-polish-nuclear-plant-on-border/story-e6frg6so-1226161575098>

GERMANY'S decision to ditch nuclear power because of safety fears was undermined yesterday with the disclosure of plans in neighbouring Poland to build an atomic plant in its western border region near to Berlin.

Brandenburg state, which borders Poland, said it had voiced strong objections after learning of four possible locations being considered for a reactor, including one just 275km from Berlin.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced earlier this year that the country's nuclear power industry would be closed down by 2020, in response to the Fukushima disaster in Japan. She was widely seen to be courting the environmental vote after a surge in support for the Green Party.

Relations with Poland, already strained after the former Polish prime minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski suggested this week that Ms Merkel came to power with the help of the secret police, are being tested by Warsaw's determination to start its first reactor in 2020, followed by a second larger

one in 2030.

It means Germany will be increasingly surrounded by nuclear plants, despite its decision to pursue renewable energy, with France committed to atomic energy and the Czech Republic planning to upgrade its nuclear facilities.

Commentators have noted that Germany will probably have to import energy from nuclear sources, at least temporarily, as it tries to replace its own capacity with wind and solar power.

Opposition to nuclear power has grown in Poland after Fukushima, but the country has signed up to EU targets to reduce greenhouse emissions and 90 per cent of its electricity comes from coal-fired generators.

The Times

10. European parliament supports separate ITER nuclear fusion budget

London (Platts)--27Sep2011/1144 am EDT/1544 GMT

<http://www.platts.com/RSSFeedDetailedNews/RSSFeed/ElectricPower/8393254>

The European parliament plenary Tuesday backed proposals for Europe's biggest nuclear fusion research project ITER to have its own autonomous budget to limit the potential for cost overruns. □ □ An autonomous budget "should guarantee a transparent and reliable financing structure while limiting potential for cost over-runs," the EP said. □ □ The EP also said it supported ITER being partially funded through project bonds issued by the European Investment Bank. □ □ The next step will be a legislative proposal from the European Commission, an EP spokeswoman told Platts. □ □ "I don't have a precise date yet but we will see if the legislative proposal has taken EP demands into account," she said. □ □ The voracious appetite of the ITER project for funds has created problems for the European Commission which adopted a proposal in March to extend the budget of the 2007-11 Euratom framework program, which funds European nuclear research, to cover 2012 and 2013. □ □ The budget for the 2012-13 extension is Eur2.5 billion (\$3.5 billion), Eur2.2 billion of which is earmarked for ITER. □ □ Then in April, the EC said that ITER needed an extra commitment of Eur650 million on top of the funding already agreed for

2012, along with a further Eur100 million to be redeployed from other areas of spending.

□□But in July, national governments rejected the idea that the proposed additional financing should come from the EU's budget for 2012, instead suggesting draining a much larger research fund that includes areas like agriculture.□□--Rachel Morison, rachel_morison@platts.com□

11.