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News Watch 110

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Toshiba wins bid for Westinghouse

As this issue of NIT was going to press, it was reported that Toshiba had won the bid for British Nuclear Group's Westinghouse Electric Company. According to media reports, Toshiba bid an estimated \$5 billion. It won the bid ahead of two other Japanese companies, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) and Hitachi, both of which had US partners in their bid. It had been thought that MHI was the front-runner, because, like Westinghouse, it builds Pressurized Water Reactors (PWR). Toshiba and Hitachi build Boiling Water Reactors (BWR). However, through the purchase of Westinghouse, Toshiba's portfolio will expand to cover both BWRs and PWRs.

Company established for intermediate storage of spent fuel

A company for intermediate storage of spent fuel was jointly established on November 21st in Mutsu City, Aomori Prefecture, by Tokyo Electric Power Company (80%) and Japan Atomic Power Co. (20%). It was named Recyclable-Fuel Storage Company.

On November 30th the company started an in-depth survey for the construction of the facility in Mutsu City.

Construction of Shimane-3 launched

Construction of Chugoku Electric Power Company's Shimane-3 reactor (ABWR, 1373 MW) commenced on December 22nd after the construction plan was approved by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry. The reactor is being constructed in Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture. Prior to this, on December 9th the company amended its application for approval, increasing the amount of reinforcing steel for some parts of the reactor building and the reactor containment vessel, in order to improve earthquake safety. Commercial operation is scheduled to begin in December 2011.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries receives two PBMR contracts

On December 6th Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) received orders from PBMR Pty. Ltd. of South Africa for basic design and materials, including forgings, for the core barrel assembly of its Pebble Bed Modular Reactor Demonstration Power Plant. Since 2001 MHI has been participating in the feasibility study for the PBMR project. In 2004 it received orders for the basic design of a helium gas turbine generator and for a concept review for the core barrel assembly. MHI hopes to receive an order to build the core barrel assembly during 2006.

Mihama-3 suspension order lifted

An order suspending the operation of Kansai Electric Power Company's Mihama-3 reactor (PWR, 826 MW) was lifted on 5 December 2005. The reactor has been out of operation since an accident on 9 August 2004, which took the lives of five people and injured six others (NIT 102, 103, 106). The order to suspend operations was originally made by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry on 27 September 2005. The suspension order was lifted the day the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency confirmed that the pipes ruptured by the accident had been replaced and met the technical standards.

However, on November 2nd it was revealed that a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries worker had mistakenly connected the wrong pipe (same model) during the replacement work and that he had attempted to pass it off by falsifying the code number of the pipe. The governor of Fukui Prefecture stated that the recent lifting of the suspension would not necessarily lead to the resumption of operation of the reactor. He indicated that he would wait and see what kind of attitude Kansai Electric would take before making a decision.

Onagawa-2 resumes operation

As reported in [NIT 108](#), all three reactors tripped automatically at Tohoku Electric Power Company's Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant in response to the 16 August 2005 Miyagi earthquake. Of these, Onagawa-2 reactor (BWR, 825 MW) resumed operation on January 17th. Both this earthquake and also one which occurred in May 2003 exceeded the design basis quake used for the original safety assessment. However, on November 25th Tohoku Electric reported to the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) that it was able to confirm that the reactors could withstand an even bigger earthquake. On December 26th NISA informed Miyagi Prefecture, Onagawa Town and Ishinomaki City that "safety is confirmed" and they gave their consent for the resumption of operations. Safety assessments of No. 1 and No. 2 reactors will

now follow, after which it is expected that they too will resume operation.

General Electric and three Japanese firms sign agreement on ESBWR

On December 16 General Electric (GE) concluded a partnership agreement with Hitachi, Toshiba and Shimizu Corporation to proceed with the Evolutionary Simplified Boiling Water Reactor (ESBWR). According to the agreement, wherever an ESBWR is employed throughout the world, the four firms will construct the reactor jointly. The ESBWR is a next generation 1550 MW large-scale reactor. GE has applied for approval from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Entergy Nuclear is said to be a promising candidate. China is also being lobbied to use ESBWR.

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