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Five Years After Fukushima: Is Southeast Asia Ready for Nuclear Power?



The crippled Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Courtesy of Flickr account of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Since the devastating triple disaster struck Japan in 2011 when a powerful earthquake off Japan's north-east coast triggered a massive tsunami that led to the Fukushima nuclear accident, key Southeast Asian stakeholders have been debating whether the region is ready to safely use nuclear power. In August, the Philippines announced its plan to study the opening of the mothballed Bataan Nuclear Power Plant, which has never been operated since it was built in the 1980s due to safety concerns. Vietnam plans to open its first nuclear power plant (NPP) by 2028 while Malaysia and Indonesia have long had nuclear energy ambitions although no national decisions have been made yet. It is expected that 0.5-0.6% of power supply in the region will be generated from nuclear power by 2035. Since the triple disaster in Japan, can regional cooperation help ASEAN Member-States strengthen nuclear safety to

address public concerns over the introduction of nuclear power in the region?

National and Regional Initiatives on Nuclear Safety

In the wake of the Fukushima accident, the importance of enhanced regional cooperation on nuclear safety and emergency preparedness and response (EP&R) were recognised by the regulatory authorities of ASEAN Member-States particularly as future plans to construct NPPs in the region are made. To this end, the ASEAN Network of Regulatory Bodies on Atomic Energy (ASEANTOM) facilitated inter-regional cooperation by assisting the European Commission in conducting its Feasibility Study on Regional Cooperation on Nuclear Emergency Preparedness and Response in ASEAN. Finalised in February 2016, it contains a regional strategy, including an action plan for

ASEANTOM's implementation with support from the European Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Various national initiatives have also been introduced to boost nuclear energy cooperation in the region. Thailand and Vietnam co-hosted a regional meeting on radiation environment monitoring cooperation to facilitate information exchange and seek opportunities to establish a regional early warning network; and Malaysia hosted a workshop on institutionalising nuclear safety regulations and the future of regulatory and legal framework on nuclear power. Indonesia launched the Centre of Excellence on Nuclear Security and Emergency Preparedness (I-CoNSEP) to strengthen nuclear security and EP&R at the national and regional level. I-CoNSEP plans to be the host for regional training on EP&R by 2017.

The National Nuclear Energy Agency of Indonesia plans to construct the Indonesia Experimental Power Reactor to prepare for the possible future utilisation of nuclear power and boost the training of its 470 nuclear scientists including young nuclear professionals on the safe operation of a small-scale nuclear power reactor. In Vietnam, the Nuclear Energy Specialist Training programme was introduced in 2014 to train 40 young specialists for Vietnam's nuclear power programme.

Gaps in Nuclear Safety in Southeast Asia

However, there are still significant regional concerns over nuclear safety in South-east Asia. The region currently does not have enough human resources that can safely operate its future NPPs. In terms of preparations for a nuclear accident, the aforementioned feasibility study concludes that

there is a lack of training on joint emergency responses in ASEAN; 83% of government bodies in the region involved in emergency preparedness do not have access to the radiological early warning system of their respective countries.

In view of the challenges to nuclear power development plans, ASEAN Member-States interested in using nuclear energy need to assure their neighbours that they will be able to safely operate their NPPs. This can be done by boosting cooperation and cultivating a regional culture of nuclear safety. In this regard, RSIS aims to contribute to the regional conversation on nuclear energy in Southeast Asia by organising the [RSIS Roundtable on Nuclear Safety and Cooperation in ASEAN at the Singapore International Energy Week](#) on October 29.

Suggested Readings:

- RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies, *Is Southeast Asia Ready for Nuclear Power?* RSIS Roundtable at the Singapore International Energy Week 2015, 29 October 2015 (Report, Singapore: RSIS Centre for NTS Studies, 2016).
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- Mely Caballero-Anthony, Alistair D. B. Cook, Julius Cesar I. Trajano, and Margareth Sembiring. *The Sustainability of Nuclear Energy in Southeast Asia: Opportunities and Challenges*. NTS Report No. 1, October 2014.

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND NATURAL DISASTERS

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Australia makes U-turn on climate change policy

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5 August 2016

Many countries will need help adapting to climate change

The Editorial Board, The New York Times
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Asean agrees on plan for a haze-free region by 2020

Agence France-Presse, The Straits Times
11 August 2016

Scientists warn anthrax just one threat as global warming melts Russian permafrost

AFP, The Straits Times
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Indonesian sago plantation company gets record \$107 million fine for fires that caused haze in 2015

Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja, The Straits Times
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Combating haze: Holding One's Breath A Year On

Margareth Sembiring, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
19 August 2016

U.S., China ratify Paris climate agreement

Reuters
3 September 2016

Climate change threatens to double malaria risk from African dams, say researchers

Reuters, The Straits Times
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Courtesy of Flickr account of DFID - UK Department for International Development and used under a creative commons license.

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Climate change impact modelling needs to include cross-sectoral interactions

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Fifth International Conference on Climate Change Adaptation 2016

15–16 October 2016
Toronto, Canada

Fifth Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum

17–19 October 2016
New York City, USA

ENERGY SECURITY

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Asia's prospects for nuclear power highlighted at regional conference

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1 September 2016

US carbon permits price falls as shale gas replaces coal

Gregory Meyer, Financial Times
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DOE: Nat'l consensus needed to reopen Bataan Nuclear Power Plant

Mara Cepeda, Rappler
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India's coal conundrum

Tom Morton, ABC News
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Nuclear Philippines is a future full of costly risks
Inquirer

12 September 2016

Hungry for power, Myanmar bets on hydro in new energy plan

Channel News Asia
12 September 2016

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25 - 27 September 2016,
Singapore

RSIS Roundtable at the Singapore International Energy Week 2016 on “Nuclear Safety and Cooperation in ASEAN”
28 October 2016,
Singapore

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World nuclear performance 2016
World Nuclear Association
2016

BP statistical review of world energy 2016
BP
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FOOD SECURITY



Photo courtesy by Flickr account of Department of Affairs and Trade, Australia, and used under a creative commons license.

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Industrial farms should lose subsidies
Claire Marshall, BBC News
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Germans told to stockpile food and water for civil defence
BBC News
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The International Food Security Treaty (IFST): Problems and prospects
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Ho Chi Minh City to improve food security through new agency
Tuoi Tre News
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BRICS Women Parliamentarians' Forum adopts Jaipur Declaration
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Govt regulations on GM crops divide seed industry
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14 October 2016
Milan, Italy

27th Commonwealth Agricultural Conference Agriculture at the crossroads: Bridging the rural-urban divide
2-4 November 2016
Singapore

HEALTH SECURITY



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Vietnam may raise retirement age as seniors' health improves

Thanh Nien News
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At regional UN meeting, south-east Asian countries agree to establish dedicated health emergency preparedness fund

UN News Centre
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Lawrence O. Gostin et al., PLoS Medicine. Vol 13 No. 5, pp 1-15
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Too costly for Indonesia to thoroughly test for Zika: Health official

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Building Trust in Local Doctors and Healthcare

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Sri Lanka Is Declared Malaria Free by World Health Organization

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Antibacterial soaps banned in US amid claims they do 'more harm than good'

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PM Lee calls on ASEAN to tackle Zika together

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12-14 October 2016
Rotterdam, Netherlands

International Society for Quality in Health Care 33rd International Conference

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Could human rights protections reverse today's cruelty?

Rami G Khouri
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After conflict, peace-building and recovery efforts too often miss the environment

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'Burma is a test of how well the UN can do any of the things it says it was meant to do'

Thant Myint-U, The Irrawaddy
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Peacebuilding as policy approach

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Sophie Richardson, Foreign Policy
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Lauren Carasik, Boston Review
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Tribe, security, justice, and peace in Libya today

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Movement for the Abolition of War

8 October 2016, University of London, London, UK

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27 November-1 December 2016, Freetown, Sierra Leone

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Courtesy of Flickr account of Coast Guard News and used under a creative commons license.

Leaders to promote drug-free ASEAN

The Philippine Star
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Ban on domestic ivory trade passes at international summit

The Guardian
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Transparency International
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Interpol and Europol to investigate how digital currency is used by the criminal underworld

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International New York Times
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Drug traffickers exploit new transit routes through Argentina

The Wall Street Journal
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ASEAN fights against trans-border crime

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Piracy falling fast across Asia, figures show

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23-24 March 2017
Prague, Czech Republic.

19th International Conference on Human Rights and Human Security
25-26 June, 2017
Paris, France

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF



Courtesy of Flickr account of The U.S. Army and used under a creative commons license.

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Glacial lake outburst floods threaten Tibet, Nepal
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Super typhoon Meranti rapidly intensifies into category 5, dangerous threat to Taiwan, China and Northern Philippines early this week
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Tsunami simulator recreates devastating waves for first time in a lab
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Humanitarian Open-StreetMap Team (HOT) Summit 2016
22 September 2016,
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International Training Course on Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage 2016
10-26 September 2016,
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Limited capacity hinders Myanmar's water management

Khine Kyaw
Myanmar Eleven
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New investment model uses water markets and impact investors to restore nature

Kelli Barrett
Ecosystem Marketplace
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Water terrorism by India

Reema Shaukat
Pakistan Observer
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PBA: Protect water resources before next Super El Nino

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Free Malaysia Today
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Change and dispossession in western Nepal

Slok Gyawali
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The fragile balance between life and death during Somali drought

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IFRC
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A plan for protecting our hidden water supplies

Jeremy Bird
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Thai students win prize for drought-fighting device

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Ministry ends large-scale water theft in Jordan Valley

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Water scarcity: Cooperation or conflict in the Middle East and North Africa

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Asia-Pacific shows progress in water security, but challenges remain – ADB

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Reductionist and integrative research approaches to complex water security policy challenges

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Water Security and Climate Change

29 Nov–1 Dec 2016
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