

1 **Japan and nuclear energy**

2 original at

3 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/12/japan-seeking-higher-ground>

4 It took 10 years to rebuild Kobe after the earthquake in 1995, but that
5 timeframe is now looking optimistic for the reconstruction needed along
6 the north-eastern coastline of Japan. Two months ago, the black wave of
7 the tsunami engulfed 16 towns, 95,000 buildings, 23 railway stations,
8 hundreds of miles of road, railway tracks and sea walls. Over 60,000 acres
9 of agricultural land were contaminated. It will take three years just to
10 clear the debris.

11 In spite of the enormity of the task ahead, there are signs that Japan is
12 moving away from disaster management. However, the catastrophe has
13 resulted in a profound change of course in Japanese energy policy. The
14 Japanese prime minister, Naoto Kan, has been criticised over the way his
15 government dealt with the operator of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi
16 plant, Tokyo Electric. That is why he has ordered the temporary closure of
17 Hamaoka, a nuclear plant which sits on an active faultline. The operation
18 of the plant will be suspended until a new tsunami wall is built. The prime
19 minister has also abandoned plans to build 14 reactors over the next 20
20 years, opting instead for a 20% increase in renewables.

21 This contrasts with the recommendation of Britain's climate change
22 committee this week to increase reliance on nuclear energy.

23 Disaster-stricken Japan is moving in the opposite direction, and it is
24 brutally clear why. Over 80,000 people living within 12 miles of Fukushima
25 have been forced out of their homes. It is far from clear when they will be
26 able to return. The compensation bill alone for the 50,000 families forced
27 to leave the exclusion zone could be astronomical. Tepco may apologise
28 deeply and profusely, but Japan's nuclear industry has lost the
29 stranglehold it once had over the energy debate. There are no votes in
30 trying to defend it now.

Questions

- 1) Why and compared to what is the timeframe needed to reconstruct Kobe following the 1995 earthquake looking optimistic?
- 2) Paraphrase 'Japan is moving away from disaster management' (line 11-12).
- 3) Rewrite the sentence beginning with 'In spite of the enormity of the task ahead...' using 'Although...' (line 11).
- 4) Why has the nuclear power plant at Hamaoka been closed down temporarily?
- 5) What is, according to the text, the difference between Japanese and British energy policy plans for the future?
- 6) Why is Japan adopting a totally different approach to energy policy than the UK?
- 7) Explain the meaning of 'There are no votes in trying to defend it now' (line 29-30).
- 8) What is your opinion on nuclear energy? Did it change following the Fukushima disaster?

Vocabulary

debris (line 10) – all the pieces that are left after something has been destroyed in an accident

faultline (line 17) – The line dividing two plates of the Earth crust. Movement of the rocks along this line often results in earthquakes, volcanic activity and the like.

bill (line 26) – a written list showing how much you have to pay for work that has been done, etc.)

stranglehold (line 29) – complete power or control over a person or situation

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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