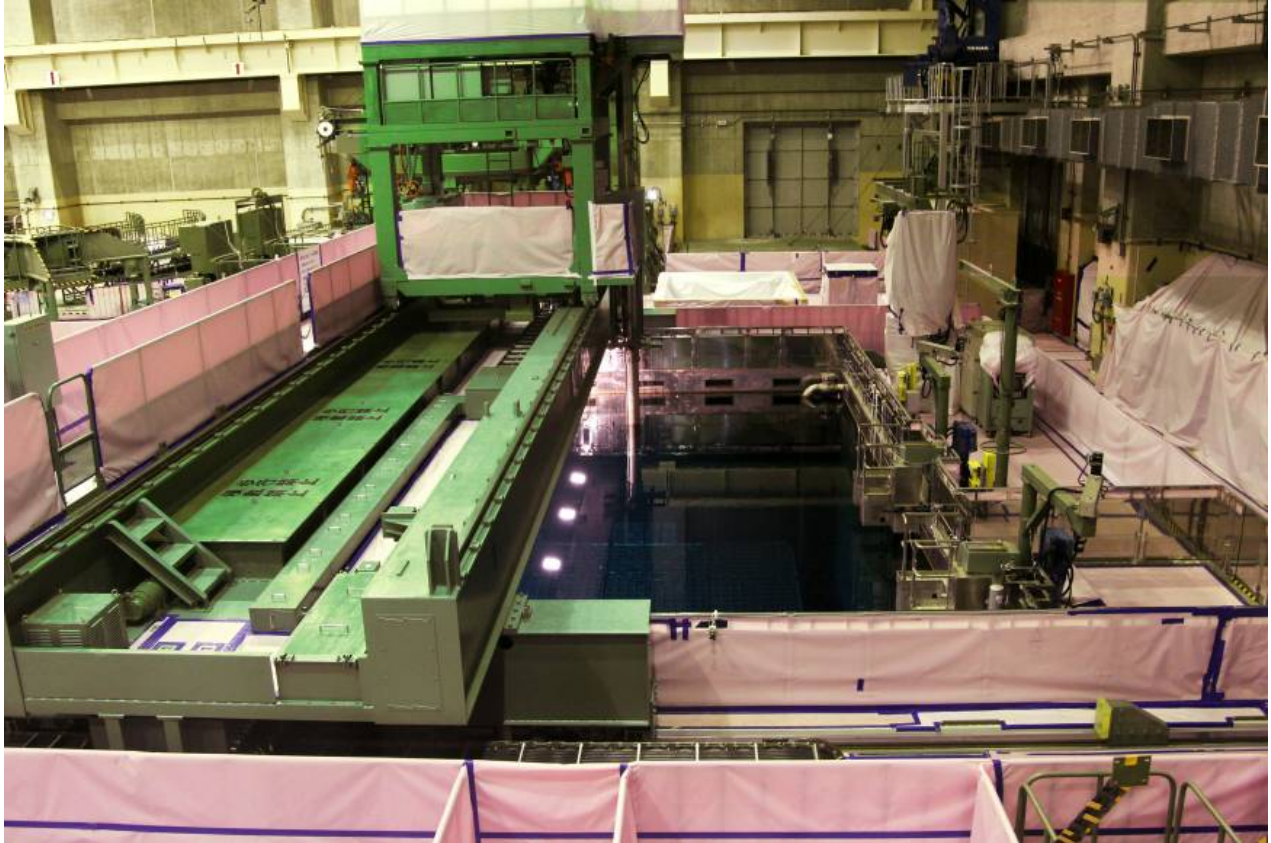


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## The Japan Times NEWS



High degree of difficulty: The spent-fuel storage pool is seen inside the reactor 4 building at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 plant in July | BLOOMBERG

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### Tepco feeling heat over fuel removal

Doubtful of utility's aptitude, experts urge help for dangerous operation

BY [ERIC JOHNSTON](#)  
STAFF WRITER

[ARTICLE HISTORY](#) | NOV 5, 2013

**OSAKA** – With Tepco due to begin removing more than 1,300 spent-fuel rod assemblies and nearly 200 fresh ones from the reactor 4 pool at the Fukushima No. 1 plant this month, global pressure is mounting to allow an international task force to monitor and assist the highly hazardous operation.

A former Japanese ambassador to Switzerland, anti-nuclear groups in Japan and abroad,

nuclear engineers, doctors and radiologists are warning of the dangers of the operation Tokyo Electric Power Co. plans to carry out and are calling for pressure on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration to be more globally transparent.

"It is urgently needed to set up an international task force to assist Japan by deploying all possible means to reduce the risks of the imminent first unloading of spent fuel from unit 4," ex-Ambassador to Switzerland Mitsuhei Murata said in a recent letter to U.S. President Barack Obama.

Journalist and activist Harvey Wasserman, writing for Global Research, an independent research and media organization based in Montreal, claims Tepco does not have the scientific, engineering or financial resources to extract the fuel on its own.

The extraction "may be humankind's most dangerous moment since the Cuban missile crisis. We are petitioning the United Nations and Obama to mobilize the global scientific community to take charge of the nuclear power plant and the job of moving these fuel rods to safety," he wrote in September.

Separately, 17 internationally prominent physicians, nuclear engineers and scientists, radiation experts, and policymakers have written to U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, asking that he appoint experts independent of both Tepco and the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has a mandate to both monitor and promote nuclear energy, to formulate a viable disaster-mitigation plan.

The operation to remove the fuel rods is also heightening fears in the U.S. over food safety, especially on the West Coast. More than 12,000 people have signed an online petition on [Change.org](http://Change.org) (<http://Change.org>) to 10 senators, calling on them to conduct an investigation into possible environmental damage to the U.S. Pacific coast.

"This would include a detailed inspection of the (Fukushima No. 1) facility by a team of experts who are independent of the nuclear industry, as well as ongoing monitoring of West Coast and Hawaii water, air and food for radiation," the petition reads.

At a meeting of largely pro-nuclear Japanese and international scientific experts in Kyoto last month, Abe said the government is open to receiving the most advanced knowledge from abroad to contain the Fukushima woes.

He also told the International Olympic Committee in September that Japan needs international assistance. But in neither case did he specify what kind of advice from abroad he would welcome.



(<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/09/14/national/japanese-media-declare-dark-times-are-on-us/>)

### Japanese media declare 'dark times' are on us

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