

**Reaffirm Significance of Possessing Nuclear Plants**

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Prime Minister Naoto Kan's manipulation of public opinions through his campaign for a society free from dependence on nuclear power plants has great potential to weaken Japan's politics and diplomatic bargaining power as well as its economy. He should remember that energy policy is essentially designed to achieve energy security to secure energy supply required for people's lives, economic and social operations and defense at acceptable prices.

**Japan should pursue best energy mix**

When Prime Minister Kan vowed to reconsider the government's basic energy plan, he failed to discuss the significance of energy security indicated in an annual energy white paper that was approved by the cabinet three days before the adoption of the basic plan. The failure came despite the fact that energy security risks cited in the white paper include recent growing geopolitical risks represented by the Senkaku Islands dispute.

The Democratic Party of Japan showed its lack of energy security consciousness by offering to boost nuclear plants' share of electricity supply to more than 50% in the basic plan. Oil crises and the like have demonstrated that excessive dependence on a single electricity source is dangerous whether it is nuclear or renewable energy. Securing energy security is the best energy mix, rather than a shift away from nuclear plants.

**Nuclear has political roles to play**

None can deny economic roles of nuclear power generation as a realistic energy source. But even more important are political and diplomatic roles of nuclear power. The maintenance of nuclear technology leaves the possibility of its military use and effectively means the possession of potential nuclear deterrence. Japan's loss of nuclear technology through a shift away from nuclear power plants could lead to a decline not only in its national power but in its potential nuclear deterrence in the international community.

At present, 31 countries have nuclear power plants. Fifteen more countries are planning to introduce such plants. As global energy demand increases on rapid population and economic growth in China, India and other emerging countries, nuclear is viewed as an indispensable source for efficient generation of massive electricity.

Obviously, however, there are a considerable number of countries willing to

possess nuclear power plants for political and diplomatic purposes rather than economic reasons. As the only atomic-bombed nation and a country plagued with a nuclear plant accident, Japan has a mission to develop and provide the world's safest nuclear power generation model instead of shifting away from nuclear plants.

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