

Fukui poised to benefit from decision to scrap Monju

Big money pull a million strings

Big money hold the prize

Big money weave a mighty web

Big money draw the flies — Rush, "The Big Money"

1) Last month's announcement that the Monju experimental fast-breeder reactor in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, would likely be decommissioned was an acknowledgement of what had been obvious for decades. Namely, that Monju was too fraught with technical and political problems to have ever stood a chance of success. (**befraught with** ~を伴う、~だらけである)

2) For Kansai, the decision brought a feeling of relief among those concerned about a plutonium-producing plant in their backyard, but a feeling of "now what?" among everyone else. No political leader in Osaka, Kyoto, Nara or Kobe either wistfully eulogized or passionately protested the recommendation that Monju, which has cost more than ¥1 trillion, be scrapped. In Fukui, however, it was a different story. (**wistfully** もの欲しそうに **eulogize** 褒めたたえる)

3) For more than four decades, Fukui's leaders have finessed the art of extracting (extorting?) as much money from Tokyo as possible in exchange for cooperation in continuing not only Monju but also 13 commercial nuclear reactors, a concentration of nuclear power plants said to be the densest in the world. (**finesse** ~を策略を用いて行う、策略で成功させる、切り抜ける)

4) Massive amounts of tax money were funneled into the prefecture by the Liberal Democratic Party for all sorts of uses. Some were noble (construction of modern train stations, schools, hospitals and social welfare facilities). Some were corrupt (propaganda museums that played down the risks of nuclear power, all expense-paid "study" tours to Europe's nuclear reactor towns for local residents that included sightseeing trips to Paris). (**funnel into** ~に注ぎ込む)

5) Nobody really knows how much money, directly and indirectly, went to Fukui and Tsuruga over the decades for "bearing the burden of Monju." Unofficial guesses put the figure in the billions of yen. But what has residents in Kansai, and elsewhere, concerned is how much it will cost them, in the form of future government payoffs to Fukui, to be rid of Monju. (**payoffs** 報酬 **be rid of** ~を免れる、脱する)

6) The prefecture certainly has friends in high places looking out for its interests. Defense Minister Tomomi Inada, a favorite of Shinzo Abe, represents Fukui's 1st district. That's the one without nuclear power plants, but she's very close to those in Fukui who support them. Then there's Tsuyoshi Takagi, who served as reconstruction minister. He's from Tsuruga and represents Fukui's 2nd district in the Lower House, an area that hosts those 13 commercial nuclear reactors. In short, Fukui has powerful allies who will work hard to ensure all manner of new funding flows to the prefecture and to Tsuruga over the coming decades. (**high places** 上層部 **look out for** ~を注意して探す)

7) Making matters better for Fukui but worse for taxpayers elsewhere, three commercial reactors will be decommissioned over the next few decades. You can be sure Fukui politicians from the governor on down are drawing up a long wish-list of pork barrel projects they will demand the central government, as well operator Kansai Electric Power Co., fork out in exchange for consenting to each reactor's decommissioning plans — plans that might include disposing high-level radioactive waste generated by decommissioning in Fukui, over the objections of residents. (**on down** ~からずっと下の方まで **pork barrel** 特定の議員[選挙区]だけに利益がある助成金 **fork out** しぶしぶ・義務として多額の金を)支払う)

8) In short, decommissioning means big money for Fukui in the years ahead in the form of subsidies, jobs and service-industry income. And not just at Monju, where the basic cost was recently estimated at ¥540 billion.

9) With predictions it might cost ¥8 trillion to scrap the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, and perhaps a dozen commercial reactors probably heading for the scrap heap in the next decade, Japan has entered the "age of nuclear power decommissioning." (**heap** 堆積、山)

10) There's big money involved that will draw a swarm of flies, especially in towns and prefectures hosting the power plants. Taxpayers elsewhere, therefore, will need to be especially vigilant and handy with the flyswatters and insect repellent. (**a swarm of flies** ハエの大群 **vigilant** 警戒する **handy with** ~がうまい、器用で **flyswatter** ハエたたき **repellent** 防虫剤、虫よけ)【Oct 15, 2016/Japan Times】

★Ice breaker for active discussion

1. Monju was once dubbed as the "dream reactor". Please explain why.
2. According to the article, a large amount of money is still needed even after decommissioning the reactor. What can you say about it?
3. If you were a politician representing Fukui, what would you do regarding the Monju reactor issue?
4. There is an expression "Not in my backyard". Please elaborate.
5. Make sentences using the following words: be fraught with, wistfully, finesse, fork out, and vigilant