

24,000 face death if Daya Bay goes

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AT LEAST 24,000 Chinese villagers and residents of rural townships face almost certain death should there be any disaster at the Daya Bay nuclear power station.

They all live within a 10 km radius of the plant, the "fallout" zone in which Anglo-French experts glibly assured Legislative Councillors any radioactive emission would be contained.

Most are farmers, fishermen and their families. Few understand what nuclear energy is, but many are worried.

One old woman villager told the *Sunday Standard* she feared "leaking gas" ever since the news of the Chernobyl disaster last April reached this backward pocket next to Hongkong.

Local village heads and party officials said they knew little about the HK\$27 billion plant. They could only put their faith in the Communist Party which they believed would take care and not put their lives at stake.

Others in the more sophisticated Shenzhen Municipality, where half of the special economic zone's 400,000 residents live, were less sanguine.

To petition officials, like Hongkong people, would be to risk government repercussion — even execution, one said — which meant there was nothing they could do to alter the decision.

Within this 10 km radius is the town of Dapeng with 10,000 residents and nearby is Pengcheng comprising a cluster of villages with more than 10,000 residents. Just outside this zone is a similar-sized town of Kuichong which is the support centre for a container facility being built nearby.

Surrounding Daya Bay in the rugged terrain are dotted numerous villages of 10s to 100s of households. Dongshan, four km opposite the power station, is a thriving cultured pearl centre of more than 1,000

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residents.

At the meeting of the Legco utilities panel on Friday, the three experts from the Guangdong Nuclear Power Joint Venture Company said anyone outside the 10 km radius would be unaffected.

This assurance, they said, was based on an assessment of account wind speed and direction, the terrain and the geology of the area in the event of a reactor meltdown.

They also claimed the containment dome around the reactor and a double safety system would automatically reduce temperature and pressure in the reactor core in the event of an accident.

Medical studies have shown a marked increase in infant mortality as a direct result of the gas which swept over several states following the disaster. The project at Daya Bay is 25 percent backed by an affiliate of China Light and Power which will take 70 percent of the output of the 1,800 megawatt station. The Hongkong Government has backed a \$600 million loan for the project.

The *Sunday Standard* has talked to the villagers and officials, and tried to sketch a "worst case" scenario of what would happen if there was a Chernobyl-type disaster. And in an exclusive interview with one of the four man team of bone marrow specialists who went to Moscow, we tell you why marrow transplants offer little hope should there be a disaster.

• Turn to pages 6 and 7 for the *Sunday Standard* special report.