

Press briefing at the Prime Minister's Office for members of the foreign press

12 April 2011

Mr. Shikata: Now we would like to move onto part two of this evening's press briefing. We will conduct the daily press briefing. Now I will just start by asking Mr. Nishiyama to go first, in terms of the situation surrounding Fukushima Daiichi and others. Deputy Director-General of NISA, Mr. Nishiyama please.

Mr. Nishiyama: Thank you Mr. Shikata. Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I would like to first very briefly report on the INES reevaluation. You may know this but I will be very brief. Our agency, NISA, estimated the total amount of discharged radioactive materials from the reactors of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant to the air, making a trial and so on, which was carried out by the Japan Nuclear Energy Safety Organization (JNES). This evaluation resulted in the value corresponding to level 7 of the INES rating. You may know this. I will answer questions if you have any.

Next I would like to report the most recent status of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Regarding Unit 1, we are continuing to inject nitrogen into the reactor of Unit 1, though it was stopped for a very short time after yesterday's earthquake. It is now going on.

Regarding Unit 2, after yesterday's earthquake, water introduction into the reactor stopped for 50 minutes and resumed thereafter. The temperature went up slightly but we do not have any problems with that. Regarding the spent fuel pool, after yesterday's earthquake, the level of water in the spent fuel pool lowered and the temperature also declined. We think this happened because there is some measurement error. Regarding stagnant water, we have almost finished repairing the leakage in the hose and the joints to transfer the water in the trench of Unit 2 to the hot well. There is no change in the level of water in the trench.

Regarding Unit 3, regarding the reactor, the situation is the same as Unit 2. For the spent fuel pool, we threw an amount of water into the spent fuel pool of Unit 3 today.

Regarding Unit 4, we collected water samples from the spent fuel pool of Unit 4 and will conduct nuclide analysis, and measure the temperature and radiation of the pool

water. That will enable us to know exactly what is happening in that pool. As you may have heard, there was a fire from the water sampling building for Units 1 to 4, this morning at 6:38 a.m., but this fire was extinguished at 9:12 a.m. The municipal fire department confirmed that the fire was out.

We are waiting for a report on the amount and the radiation of water released from the sub-drain pits of Units 5 and 6, and also from the radiation waste disposal system to the sea. We will announce this as soon as we finish our report. That will of course be based on TEPCO's report.

We sprayed synthetic plastic to settle the radiated dust, so as not to let them fly over to other areas. In addition we placed iron plates in the lagoon in front of the intakes in front of Units 1 to 4, to not let the contaminated water flow to other areas of the sea. That is all from my report today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Shikata: I would like to ask Mr. Kawarada of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to go next.

Mr. Kawarada: Good evening. MEXT, as you know, continues to take measurements of the monitoring posts beyond 20km from the plant, on the land, sea and air. The trend so far is, as Mr. Edano has said, that the radiation level continues to come down, and the spatial radiation level also continues to come down. Also, we continue to receive reports from all prefectures, and the data provided by all prefectures suggests that in some prefectures in close proximity to Fukushima there have been some higher levels of radiation observed, but in most of the prefectures, the radiation levels continue to be very low or negligible. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Mr. Tsukasa Kawaguchi, Deputy Director of the Secretariat of the NSC.

Mr. Kawaguchi: Good evening. I am Kawaguchi from the NSC Secretariat. The next report provides monitoring data on the radiation. Yesterday we did not make any announcement on the radiation. We do not have any material on that matter. Instead, we have provided you with three types of material. The first type has to do with what Mr. Nishiyama has explained, that is, on the INES evaluation: As a result of our monitoring, we have tried to estimate the total amount of radioactive material released into the atmosphere and iodine 131 is 1.5×10^{17} ; and for cesium it is 1.2×10^{16} . This is the result

of our estimate. We have also provided you with another set of information, which you received yesterday as well, therefore I shall not dwell on the explanation. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Next, Mr. Kaji, Director of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW).

Mr. Kaji: Good evening. I represent MHLW. We have a long list of the results of the tests that we have conducted on food. We have, on an accumulated basis, tested 1,291 samples of which 169 samples proved to be above the provisional standard. We also have the information that we made public yesterday. There is a typo. Number four says food tested. It is not chicken, and it should read eggs, rather than chicken.

Mr. Shikata: Now I would like to ask Mr. Nakayama of the Fisheries Agency to go next.

Mr. Nakayama: I have just one point to share with you. If you go to the website of our agency, you will find the samples tested by the prefectures and their findings. There were four samples posted. Sand lance from Ibaraki and also the young of the lance, all proved to be either under the level or not detected. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Mr. Matsunaga of the Foreign Ministry please

Mr. Matsunaga: Thank you, Mr. Shikata. My report is very brief this evening. Tomorrow morning a flight loaded with nuclear-related equipment is arriving at Narita Airport from the United Kingdom. This is the second dispatch from the United Kingdom with respect to their provision of nuclear-related equipment such as radiation survey meters or protective masks. In addition, the UK Government had already dispatched 100t of drinking water. We greatly appreciate those acts of cooperation today.

Second, I would like to mention the donation of relief money from Eritrea. In response to the earthquake, the government of the State of Eritrea made a donation of relief money for Japan. The government of Japan greatly appreciates the assistance extended by the government of Eritrea and its people. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Now I would like to open the floor for questions.

QUESTION (Mr. Kincaid, The Economist): I have a very general question. The most polite question I could think of. It is about the synthetic plastic. I am very intrigued about what it is, who makes the technology, how long you have been doing it for, how much the stuff costs, what you hope to do with it and whether it can be used beyond Fukushima. Just tell us more about this process. Thank you.

Mr. Nishiyama: What we are using now is called Kuri-coat, developed by Kurita Engineering Company, and it is called synthetic plastic emulsion. This is something that is generally used, in ordinary conditions, in activities such as in the construction of roads. It is used for example on the dirt slopes on the side of the road. Also, it is used in land reclamation, and for the purpose of preventing dust from scattering around. In Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, we are spraying this synthetic plastic on an experimental basis to try to settle and keep the radiated dust in the premises from flying away with the wind or, for instance, pouring out with the rain.

QUESTION (Mr. Wallace, The Australian): I have a question for Mr. Nishiyama. We have seen, as you know, recently, a number of strong aftershocks some of which have rattled the plant at Fukushima. We have seen a temporary power loss and we have seen some sort of temporary relocation of workers. I wanted to ask you, that given that the seismologists say that these aftershocks will continue, what is the greatest risk that they pose to the reactors there? Is it by way of rupturing piping, or severing cooling through a power loss, or are there other consequences of strong quakes near and around the plant that we do not know about yet?

Mr. Nishiyama: As I see it, the greatest risk would be hindrance to our efforts that are now being made for stable cooling of the fuel that has been partly damaged, by injecting water, and the greatest damage would be any hindrance to this work as a result of power loss or as a result of not being able to fully inject the water. Regarding the facilities themselves, be it the reactor itself or other parts of the nuclear power station, we do not anticipate there would be any damage done to the facilities themselves due to the tremor. The Japanese nuclear power stations did suffer great damage from the tsunami this time, but regarding the tremor itself, the tremors are of an order that the facilities can comfortably endure.

QUESTION (Mr. Azhari, PanOrient News): My question, Mr. Nishiyama, is about the temperature. What is the temperature now in the reactors, that you are trying to reduce,

and to what degree do you want to reduce it? And what is the temperature of the water you are using? And if it is reduced to the temperature that you want shall we say that everything is finished, basically, and you have solved the problem? Thank you.

Mr. Nishiyama: Currently, regarding the temperature in the reactor, the lowest temperature, which is in Unit 3, is 105°C. And in Unit 1, which currently has the highest temperature, the temperature is 216°C. These are temperatures that have been measured in a certain part of the reactor. Our objective is to reduce this temperature to below 100°C or even lower.

QUESTION (Ms. Lee, Hong Kong Phoenix TV): I have a question to Mr. Nishiyama and the member from the NSC. Today, TEPCO has mentioned that the cesium 131 released from Units 1 through 6 is 1/100. Specifically, what would be the total level of radiation and what specifically does this number of 1/100 mean?

Mr. Nishiyama: I also am not sure of the numbers that TEPCO has made public. TEPCO is aware of what the status of the fuel was when the earthquake occurred so perhaps they made a calculation based on a certain notion, but I do not know the grounds for those numbers.

Mr. Kawaguchi: I also am not aware in detail of that information, so I think it is something that we need to think about after we are able to know more in detail, what kind of numbers were made public by TEPCO and based on what kind of notion those numbers were calculated.

QUESTION (Mr. Knittel, Freelance): Mr. Nishiyama, about the fire in the morning, where exactly did it happen? Do you know? And why did it happen? Was there any kind of radioactive rate after it?

Mr. Nishiyama: It is our understanding that this occurred in the building where the analysis is done upon gathering water from the water discharge gates in Units 1 to 4. I have been told that the place where the batteries are seems to be sizzling a bit. I have not been informed of any effect of radiation as a result of the fire.

Mr. Shikata: If there are no other questions? Okay, very last question from Dennis.

QUESTION (Mr. Normile, Science Magazine): I'm not sure if these are the right people to ask this question to; I know that most of your attention is focused on trying to gain control of the reactors, but I'm wondering if anyone is thinking ahead to what might be done in the areas that are going to be evacuated or the areas that have been evacuated? Will there be attempts to clean up the radiation that is now contaminating the soil? Has anyone started to think about that phase of dealing with this accident?

Mr. Nishiyama: What is most important is to make sure to gain control of the nuclear power plant and to create a situation where radiation will no longer be released. However, as you said, after that, in order to have the residents return to the area, we will need to remove the radioactive material. It is true that that may require removing the soil and so forth, but we are going to be looking into those matters.

Mr. Shikata: This concludes today's briefing. We will have another round of briefing tomorrow evening.