

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

31 March 2011

Mr. Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations: Good evening. Thank you very much for coming to the Prime Minister's Office for the briefing by the Japanese government officials for the international press. Today we have briefers from various ministries and agencies including Mr. Hidehiko Nishiyama, Deputy Director-General of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) on my right and Mr. Takeshi Matsunaga, Assistant Press Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to his right. To my left are Mr. Itaru Watanabe, Senior Deputy Director-General of the Science and Technology Policy Bureau of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and lastly Ms. Noriko Iseki, Senior Technical Officer of the Food Safety Department of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). My name is Noriyuki Shikata, Deputy Cabinet Secretary for Public Relations at the Prime Minister's Office.

At the outset, let me just do a brief recap of Chief Cabinet Secretary Mr. Edano's press conferences that he held today. In the morning from 11:00, he held a press conference and he referred to the following points especially in relation to the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) monitoring results. According to soil monitoring conducted by IAEA, high levels of radioactive substances exceeding the IAEA criteria were detected in one sample of the soil around the nuclear power plant. The IAEA advised that the Japanese government should carefully assess the situation.

And Mr. Edano mentioned that these standard values established by the IAEA are of a precautionary nature; if a person is exposed to radiation levels exceeding the IAEA criteria for long hours, it might affect their health because radioactive substances could accumulate in the body. At the same time, he mentioned that his recognition is that there is no immediate risk to human health at this moment based on air radiation monitoring conducted by the Japanese government as well as the IAEA's advice and expert analysis.

However, if a person is exposed to the current radiation levels in the longer run, there could be possible health impact, so the government will conduct detailed and wide-ranging monitoring of the air and soil, and if response is necessary the government

will take action without delay.

In the evening, Mr. Edano mentioned that regarding the food imports of other countries from Japan, the Japanese government has been providing relevant information on the nuclear power plant accidents proactively to foreign governments. We have called on other countries to react in a rational manner based on scientific findings.

But one hour ago, Mr. Edano held another press conference and he referred to two points. One is, in regards to the energy policy, the Japanese government will verify the cause of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accidents thoroughly after we bring the situation at the nuclear power station under control. After that, based on the verification outcome, we will discuss and formulate a comprehensive energy policy.

And also, on the issue of possibly lifting of the suspension on agricultural product shipments, MHLW and the Ministry of Agriculture intend to set clear directions that can contribute to the lifting of the suspension of agricultural product shipments incurred by the nuclear power plant accident as soon as possible based on the Food Safety Commission's opinions.

And lastly, let me just briefly touch upon the meeting between Prime Minister Kan and President Sarkozy that was held this evening. As you are aware, both leaders held a joint press conference in which they referred to crafting new international nuclear safety standards by the end of this year. Both leaders agreed that these nuclear safety issues will be discussed at the G8 Summit meeting in late May, which President Sarkozy will be chairing as the G8 and actually G20 Chair. President Sarkozy mentioned that he will try to release a communiqué on nuclear safety at the forthcoming summit and ask Prime Minister Kan to come up with an initial opening statement in the context of the G8.

And, as you are aware, there is collaboration between Japan and France on the issue of tackling the current situation of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. As you are aware, the CEO of Areva and other experts came to Japan and we are very closely in touch with each other to tackle the current challenging situation. Also, we appreciate the French government's offer as well as companies like Areva for extending to us some of the protective care and other equipment from France along with rescue missions.

So let me now ask Mr. Nishiyama of NISA to come up and give his opening remarks.

Thank you.

Mr. Nishiyama: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Shikata. I would like to briefly update you on the most recent status of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

Regarding Unit 1, with respect to the reactor, parameters of the reactor of Unit 1 are relatively stable right now. Regarding the spent fuel pool, we are injecting pure water into the spent fuel pool of Unit 1. With respect to stagnant water, a part of the water in the turbine building was already pumped out into the hot well. Since the hot well became full, we plan to move the water in the hot well to the condensate storage tank. Before that, we will move the water in the condensate storage tank to the suppression pool surge tank. Water in the trench - a part of this water in the trench attached to Unit 1 was moved to the radioactive waste building to lower the surface by 1m.

Regarding Unit 2, with respect to the reactor, after we increased the amount of pure water introduced to the reactor, the temperature of the pressured vessel of Unit 2 decreased. Regarding the spent fuel pool, yesterday there were some difficulties in introducing pure water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 2 firstly by tentative electricity-driven pumps, and secondly by fire-extinguishing pumps. Both of them have had some trouble. We will resume the action after we check the fire-extinguishing hoses. Regarding stagnant water in the turbine building of Unit 2, we have been moving the water into the condensed storage tank to the suppression pool storage tank. This is the first step to deal with this stagnant water in the turbine building of Unit 2. It will continue until tomorrow.

Regarding the reactor of Unit 3, parameters of the reactor are relatively stable. With respect to the spent fuel pool, we have been throwing pure water to the spent fuel pool of Unit 3. It will take three hours. Regarding the spent fuel pool of Unit 4, yesterday we threw water into the spent fuel pool of Unit 4 by concrete pumping machines.

So, separate from the status of each plant, we found stagnant water on the second floor basement of the radioactive waste building. The radioactive data in the surface of the water is $0.5\mu\text{Sv}$ per hour. Therefore, it is almost the same as the atmosphere nearby. Therefore, it is assumed that most of the water was thrown there by the tsunami.

Next, concerning the monitoring data of the seawater near the canal attached to Units 1 to 4, we found the figure was 4,385 times the maximum density regarding iodine 131. However, those figures show no immediate negative effects for human health nearby, because the area 20km from the Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant is designated as an area for evacuation, and no such activities as fishing is conducted. Also it is expected that the seawater will not be directly consumed and its effects on seaweed will be minimal because it will dissipate, and within eight days, iodine's radiation will be halved. However, we will closely monitor the data in the future. We will strengthen the monitoring activities regarding seawater and underground water. With respect to seawater, we will add three points to take samples. With respect to underground water, we will take samples from the seaside subdrain pit water which is located lower than the level of the underground water surface. Also we will take some samples from three points near Units 5, 6, and the southern border of the site. That is all for my report today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you very much Mr. Nishiyama. Then, I would like to ask Mr. Watanabe of MEXT to speak next.

Mr. Watanabe: Well, MEXT is continuing activities for environmental monitoring and updated data is listed on the papers provided today. The issue of additional airborne monitoring over Fukushima Prefecture was added to today's paper. Thank you. The data is just normal data, compared with the data in the past. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Thank you, Mr. Watanabe. Then, I would like to ask Ms. Iseki of MHLW to speak.

Ms. Iseki: I would like to briefly provide my daily report on the test samples conducted in eight prefectures. The total number of samples was 76. Among them, 25 food samples tested in Fukushima Prefecture were found to be at positive levels exceeding the provisional regulation limits. Regarding these food samples concerned, I would like to remind you that the government had already issued instructions as of 23 March to restrict the distribution and consumption of such foods. Those foods concerned are not on the market. I have two papers distributed and you will find up-to-date reports carried out since 19 March: in total, 1,669 food samples were tested and 124 food samples were detected at positive levels exceeding the maximum limits. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Next, Mr. Matsunaga of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Matsunaga: Thank you, Mr. Shikata. I would like to update you about the assistance of foreign countries and territories to Japan. This afternoon, the third batch of relief supplies from China has arrived. It consists of 10,000 pairs of rubber gloves, 60 portable toilets, as well as 25,000 pairs of sneakers. It will be provided to Miyagi Prefecture. It is a part of the 30 million yuan of cooperation expressed by the government of China. The government of Japan is deeply appreciative of the cooperation of the government.

Additionally, I would like to mention that additional relief supplies from the Government of the Republic of Korea are expected to arrive in Niigata Port the day after tomorrow. In light of the needs of the areas affected by the earthquake, 480 tons of water, 21 tons of boil-in-bag rice, as well as 225kg of Korean seaweed will be provided to Miyagi Prefecture. Transportation from Niigata to Miyagi Prefecture will be provided with the cooperation of World Food Program (WFP). The Republic of Korea has already extended foodstuffs and water, etc. Again, the government of Japan deeply appreciates the cooperation of the government of the Republic of Korea.

I would like to mention that Azerbaijan joined the countries which expressed the provision of a monetary donation. In that regard, again, we deeply appreciate the cooperation of the government of Azerbaijan.

Next, I would like to mention about additional cooperation provided by US forces in Japan, with respect to the earthquake. A week ago, on March 24, I explained about the cooperation of the US forces in Japan and I would like to provide a few updates in that regard. On March 24, I explained about the activities of the US Navy in Japan. The Japan-US joint airlift operation of 30,000 portions of US survival food was undertaken. The food was airlifted by US helicopters from U.S.S. Ronald Reagan and other US ships to Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force ships. Then the food was airlifted by the Self Defense Forces to Miyagi Prefecture. After the joint airlift operation, the US ships carried out search and rescue operations off the coast of Iwate Prefecture and their helicopters airlifted water, clothes, medicine, baby's nappies, heating oil, etc. In the last few days, the Navy has been enhancing its focus on removal of obstacles in ports. That work is being undertaken by US rescue ship Safeguard in Yoto Port as well as in Miyako Port. We understand that the U.S.S. Safeguard will further undertake the task of removing obstacles in Kamaishi Port, Ofunato Port, and Sendai Port. With respect to US

Marines, I explained on 24 March that an amphibious sea assault ship, U.S.S. Essex, bearing the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, and dock landing ships, U.S.S. German Town and U.S.S. Harpers Ferry, moved from the Japan Sea to off Yato City of Aomori Prefecture on 21 March and started, together with dock landing ship U.S.S. Tortuga, airlift of assistance goods using their sea-based aircraft to Miyako City of Iwate Prefecture. Now the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit is undertaking humanitarian assistance activities in Ofunato City, Kamaishi City, and their vicinities in Iwate Prefecture. On 27 March, they transported electricity supply vehicles and water supply vehicles to Oshima in Kesennuma City of Miyagi Prefecture, and they provided humanitarian supplies. They also cooperated with the Army in work to recover Sendai Airport, etc. Their medical contingents are also working with Self Defense Forces medical officers. As I mentioned a week ago, the US tanker plane KC130 established a fuel supply center in Yamagata Airport.

Lastly, I'd like to mention the additional cooperation of US forces in Japan with respect to Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Two US Navy barges loaded with 1.9 million liters of fresh water to be used for cooling nuclear reactors had departed Navy facilities in Yokosuka. Towed by Maritime Self Defense Forces ships, they arrived in Onahama Port, Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture on 27 and 28 March. Equipped with necessary work, one of the two barges is arriving at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant today. Thank you.

Mr. Shikata: Now I would like to open the floor for questions. When you ask a question, please identify yourself with your name and affiliation. Also, please limit your question to only one.

QUESTION (Mr. Kujath, ARD Radio): I would like to ask Mr. Nishiyama, did you already find the leakage, which was responsible for so much iodine coming out into the sea, and do you expect that there will be a rise tomorrow again, since it got up and got up and got up?

Mr. Nishiyama: We have not yet found out how it is flowing into the sea, actually, from each of the units of the nuclear power station. Also regarding tomorrow, we cannot tell because even up to now we had cases when the levels will decline and then maybe go up again and we have been repeatedly having cases where it would go down and maybe go up again. So, that may happen again.

QUESTION (Mr. Herskovitz, Reuters): I'm wondering when the spent fuel rods, reactor cores, will be cool enough so that you can go about with greater operations to scrap, as TEPCO said, these four nuclear reactors?

Mr. Nishiyama: First, of all, to start with the conclusion, the conclusion is that we do not know for sure at the current moment. We need to adequately cool both the spent fuel rods and the reactor cores. Right now, we are cooling by injecting water, but we are aiming to create a system where we can cool the spent fuel rods as well as the reactor cores in a stable manner using an outside power source and once that system is completed we would be able to go into the procedures for scrapping the units. But I am not able to say clearly at the moment how long that would take.

QUESTION (Mr. Narioka, Dow Jones Newswires): Several days have passed since we found the water in the turbine buildings, and trenches near the reactors. I do know you have made some progress, but it seems the progress is very slow. What is fundamentally keeping you from removing water much faster? We don't have enough pumps? Or we don't have enough storage tanks? Is the level of radiation near this water too high to deal with?

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, we are having a hard time securing the tanks and other containers for taking the water to or moving the water to. Right now we are looking for tanks nearby, and also we are expanding our scope and looking at any options within the site. Perhaps there may be other ways as well, so we are taking into consideration various approaches that can be taken, and what is most important first and foremost is to secure a place to move the water to.

Obviously there is also the issue that some of the water is very highly radiated. In that case, there will be a limit to the length of time that we can work close to that water.

QUESTION (Mr. Kujath, ARD Radio): Thank you again. Again for Mr. Nishiyama. Who is in charge for measurement directly at the Fukushima Plant? For example, I heard that the plutonium measurement was made by TEPCO and was done on 21 March until 23 March, but we do not know what is going on actually. Do you also do measurements directly at the plant or are you belonging or are you coping with the measurements made by TEPCO?

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, regarding the plutonium, technology and techniques are required for measuring plutonium. So what is being made public is the result of analysis done by the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) in Ibaraki based on the samples that have been taken by TEPCO.

And regarding the data other than plutonium, basically it is TEPCO that takes the samples on the site, and we check how the samples are taken and how the analysis is being done in order to check the accuracy of the data.

QUESTION (Mr. Herskovitz, Reuters): I am wondering about various reports indicating that there were problems with the Fukushima Plant, specifically with regard to protection for tsunamis. There is a 2007 report from a senior safety engineer indicating that there was not enough preparation for this. Was there a fundamental lack of government oversight and action with regard to these plants, given the warnings that were out there with regard to tsunamis and other dangers for the Fukushima Plant?

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, regarding the tsunami and earthquake, we have the guidelines for inspection regarding anti-earthquake or anti-seismic design that is approved by the Nuclear Safety Commission, and that guideline is to be applied inclusive of the most recent findings. Based on the newest and most updated version of the guidelines for the inspection of anti-seismic design, the Japanese government has inspected the strength of each of the power plants against the sway from earthquakes. We have until very recently confirmed the safety of all of the power plants.

On the other hand, for the tsunami, we were in the process of checking each of the power plants, based on the new guidelines that have been formulated. For each of the power plants, we were going to do a check, assuming the largest tsunami that has ever happened in history.

For the Fukushima power plant as well, we were precisely in the process of investigating the size of the tsunamis that had occurred in the past, and to check the resistance to tsunamis of the nuclear power plant against the specific size of the tsunami that was the largest to have occurred in the past. The incident took place at an unfortunate timing, when we were precisely in the process of doing that checking.

QUESTION (Mr. Knittel, Freelance): There was an article in the Financial Times in which a scientist said that TEPCO did not consider the tsunami from 896 which was comparable to the tsunami in March.

Mr. Nishiyama: All of the tsunamis that occurred in past history have been taken into account. We were aware, however, that there were some tsunamis for which evaluation has not yet been determined. Therefore, we were at the stage where we were thinking of taking measures, when the experts were finally able to decide on the assessment of some tsunamis.

QUESTION (Mr. Herskovitz, Reuters): With regard to TEPCO, investors have shown their lack of confidence in TEPCO. Its shares have fallen 80% since the incident. The company has a record of spotty maintenance of nuclear facilities. Given Japan's heavy reliance on nuclear energy, its situation of being in such an earthquake prone area, and the record of TEPCO, is there any responsibility of the government, for a lack of sufficient oversight of its nuclear power plants?

Mr. Nishiyama: Once the current emergency situation settles down, we intend to seriously look back on this incident, and seriously review this incident. The incident that we faced this time, however, was a tsunami of more than 15m, which is a rare event, even in human history, and so it is difficult to tell, to what extent it is by human oversight, and to what extent it is the force of Mother Nature. But in any event, in the near future, we intend to make sure to fully analyze this incident.

QUESTION (Mr. Kujath, ARD News): This is a question for Mr. Shikata if I may. There was, some years ago, the question or the request for the utility companies in Japan, east and west, for example, to TEPCO, to build up transverters, so that there could be a more easy exchange of electricity between western and eastern Japan, and it didn't happen at all, as far as I know. Did the government now order the utility companies to do something immediately? I know it will take time, until two years, but did the government order them to start?

Mr. Nishiyama: First of all, it is considered that to unify the two frequencies that we have, 50Hz and 60Hz, would be accompanied by enormous difficulty, and at the moment it is considered to be more or less impossible to unify these two different frequencies. But another approach that can be taken is to increase the capacity of the

conversion equipment to convert one frequency to the other.

As one option from quite some time ago, there had been a discussion of sharing large amounts of electricity between the eastern part of Japan and the western part of Japan when a situation like the one we are encountering happens. But in order to do so it would involve the construction of transmission lines and the accompanying acquisition of the land for constructing the transmission lines, which will have a bearing both on the financial capability as well as the human resource capability of the electric power utilities. And because of this difficulty this matter did not move forward up to now. While I am not directly responsible for this matter, I would assume that going forward there will be a serious discussion on this matter.

QUESTION (Mr. Kujath, ARD Radio): Just to clarify, who is responsible? Is this a matter that the government should decide, and should urge to do something?

Mr. Nishiyama: Although my memory is not clear on this matter, as far as I remember, I believe there is a neutral organization comprised of electric power utilities that is the organization that will consider issues regarding transmission lines and will decide on the policy to be taken. Although the government can make recommendations, if my memory serves me correctly I believe the government does not have the authority to force the electric power utilities to do so.

Mr. Shikata: I would like to wrap up today's briefing. Maybe a very last question.

QUESTION (Mr. Knittel, Freelance): One more question to the daily report of Mr. Nishiyama. The pumps that you use to bring the water, can you use the reactors' own pumps now, or do you use only the pumps from the fire trucks? What kind of pumps can you use?

Mr. Nishiyama: The pumps that were there from the beginning at the nuclear power station cannot be used, so the pumps that we can use at the moment include the temporarily installed electricity driven pumps and the pumps from the fire engines.

Mr. Shikata: This concludes today's briefing. We will have another round tomorrow evening. Thank you very much for coming.

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