

The 10th Meeting of the Investigation Committee on the Accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Company

Comments Made at the Press Conference by the Chairperson of the Committee Dr. Hatamura

Date and time: From 18:00, Monday, April 23, 2012
Venue: Meeting Room 401, JA Building, Otemachi Conference Center

We have finished the 10th meeting of the Investigation Committee on the Accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Company today.

The meeting started with the Secretariat's report on the status of the investigation up to the present day.

The Committee completed the interim report on December 26 last year. About four months have passed since then, during which we have been intensively making further investigation and verification.

The Secretariat's report today was made from the viewpoint of what should be described as a true recounting of events in the final report based on the investigation up to today, though it only includes facts thus far discovered.

Based on the reported status of investigation, we discussed today what evaluation and recommendations the Committee should make in the final report.

We must further scrutinize the contents of all facts, for the description of which, in the final report, the Committee has been requesting the Secretariat to prepare a draft based on a further investigation and discussions at the Committee. As for the Committee's evaluation and recommendations, which will be the core of the final report, we are at a stage where a working group consisting of members of the Committee and its technical advisors is carefully examining the contents and will start describing them in specific detail.

Although the Committee has many things to accomplish for the final report that will be completed in July, we think that the Committee's work is making steady progress step by step.

Next, we would like to inform you regarding the details of the information and opinions that were gathered from the interviews carried out at the affected municipalities.

In November of last year, in order to hear the direct voices of the people who suffered in the affected areas, we met with the town mayors of Okuma-machi and Futaba-machi, where the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Station (Fukushima Dai-ichi NPS) is located. They spoke about the conditions of the disaster-stricken areas and the situations of the victims of such areas while also explaining to us the issues and problems they are having with regard to the Japanese government's response and arrangements.

In addition to the above, we have recently made further coordination with other affected local governments and have visited three municipalities to hear the opinions of the local people.

First, we visited Nihonmatsu City on April 10, to which Namie-machi, a town located in Fukushima Prefecture, has temporarily relocated its office functions. Then we listened to the voices of Town Mayor Tamotsu Baba and townspeople's representatives, that is, executive members of various organizations, such as the local residents association, fire brigade, agricultural cooperative, fishery cooperative, chamber of commerce, and PTA council members. We visited the city's temporary housing as well, where townspeople of Namie-machi have been evacuated.

On April 17, we visited Iino-machi in Fukushima City, to which Iitate-mura, a village near the Fukushima Dai-ichi NPS, has temporarily relocated its office functions. After this, we proceeded to Minamisoma City. We listened to reports made by Village Headman Norio Kanno of Iitate-mura

and Mayor Katsunobu Sakurai of Minamisoma City. On the same day, we made an inspection of Minamisoma's Odaka Ward as well, which became an evacuation release-preparation zone as a result of a review on evacuation zones and emergency evacuation preparation zones.

I have been using the Japanese word Genjin (people on site) to refer to the local people we meet and talk with in disaster-stricken areas. Therefore, in this respect, each member of the Committee, who has visited disaster-stricken areas, has met and talked with Genjin.

We thought we knew and understood many things from our usual investigation. However, since visiting the disaster-stricken areas and meeting the village headmen, mayors, and local people while also speaking with people living in temporary housing and so forth, we have been increasingly made aware of the impact of the nuclear accident, or perhaps, I should say that we have come to understand more clearly the severity of what has happened as well as the harsh conditions resulting from the event.

Whenever I met people, such as village headmen, mayors, and local residents, I mentioned that I decided to capture a full picture of this accident at the time of accepting the position of the Chairperson of the Investigation Committee on the Accident. Since then, I have frequently had a strong interest in what events occurred in the Nuclear Power Stations immediately after the earthquake that involved the tsunami and how the events developed thereafter.

When our investigation and verification started to make gradual progress and various facts came to light, I came to realize that even though being able to grasp and understand what occurred in the Nuclear Power Stations was of great importance, it was still insufficient for us to capture the overall picture of the accident.

In terms of the seriousness of this nuclear power plant accident, I have come think that the most serious issue is with the sudden relocation of a large number of people from their homes. This occurred against their will because radioactive materials were released as a result of what happened in the Nuclear Power Stations and the materials fell onto and contaminated where they used to live.

What is worse is that these people are not in a position to know clearly how and to what extent the radioactive materials are dangerous or to what degree the radioactive materials might affect them. Furthermore, they are not sure when and how they can return to where they used to live.

I have come to realize that these matters very heavily weigh on the victims.

In this sense, I have come to feel strongly that the members of the Committee must properly deal with these matters as if they were their own problems, and understand how and why they have been developing, and consider whether the damage to the victims would have been minimized if some proper preparations or arrangement had been made in a timely manner. We must handle nuclear power with consideration of these matters as our common knowledge while keeping in mind that it may be an option that we will not use nuclear power any more in the future. We must think over all these things and have a proper knowledge of how to deal with nuclear power generation.

In fact, I have come to feel strongly that our results would be insufficient if we only learned about the accident through direct investigation of the Nuclear Power Stations. In other words, we must always think properly about what would be the results of such an accident and how it would develop and affect us if it should occur in our daily lives, industrial activities, production activities, and such like.

Another thing I would like to speak about is what I found when I visited the temporary housing in the disaster-stricken areas. The people were suddenly relocated, and they had to move into other places that were entirely different in climate and other living conditions. I was not allowed to go inside of the houses, but I was able to get a sense of the dimensions of the houses since I have also visited places that have suffered from the tsunami.

What is more, I sensed the great difficulty of entering those locations. This was something that I had not thought of up to then.

When we talked with townspeople who were affected, we were informed of a case where, for

example, the members of a family who lived together were separated because the husband could not leave the location of his work while his wife and children were forced to migrate to a different place with low radioactivity. If the family included elderly people, the members of the family were forced to live in three different places. They explained to us that such cases have been occurring frequently.

The horrible part of a nuclear power disaster is that it tears down families and their hearts. Every town mayor, city mayor, and village headman that I met with explained this to me.

They say that it tears down everything into an unrecoverable condition.

I felt that I would not have properly grasped these distressing circumstances if I had not visited the areas.

This is the biggest thing that I felt during my visit to the disaster-stricken areas when I heard directly from the local people.

Next, I would like to talk about the progress of the interviews that we have been conducting.

As of Friday, April 20, the total number of people interviewed reached 718 and this consisted of approximately 1,384 hours in total interview time.

At the press conference after the last meeting of the Committee, that being the ninth meeting, we announced the names of the political leaders interviewed up to then as well as their positions. We interviewed two other political leaders after that.

More specifically, we interviewed Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano on March 25 and Former Prime Minister Naoto Kan on April 3.

The Committee is currently summarizing the results of the interviews made with relevant persons up to now, while also comparing and collating any other relevant data that we have. We will continue interviewing people concerned including political leaders if needed depending on the progress of our investigation.

I think that is all for today. Thank you for your kind attention.