

Wednesday, March 23, 2011

Kaieda sorry for threat to 'punish' firefighters who balk at nuke plant

Kyodo News

Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Banri Kaieda apologized Tuesday over reports that he threatened to "punish" firefighters if they didn't carry out an operation to spray water into the No. 3 reactor building at the Fukushima No. 1 plant.

Kaieda refrained from admitting whether he actually made the threat, but he told a news conference that "if my remarks offended firefighters . . . I would like to apologize on that point."

The move came after Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara lodged a protest Monday with Prime Minister Naoto Kan over the "forcing" of Tokyo Fire Department members dispatched to the nuclear plant to engage in an hours-long water-spraying mission and referring to "punishment" if they refused the task.

According to Ishihara, Kan apologized. Ishihara said he didn't know who actually made the threat, but sources close to the metropolitan government said it was Kaieda.

Ishihara also said that equipment broke down because of the continuous mission, which involved spraying water toward the No. 3 reactor building for 13 hours at a time.

Kaieda serves as deputy head of the nuclear disaster task force jointly set up by the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co. The task force is headed by Kan. Kaieda said a liaison staffer mediated the communication between him and the firefighters.

The dousing mission can now be carried out for lengthy periods basically unattended through the use of vehicles capable of shooting a large amount of water toward the reactor from a height of 22 meters.

The mission in the highly contaminated plant area is considered essential to cooling down a pool in the No. 3 reactor building storing spent nuclear fuel, feared to have been boiling.

The pool is located inside the building, but water can be shot from outside because the building suffered damage from an apparent hydrogen explosion.

If fuel is no longer fully covered by water, which evaporates in the high heat of the fuel rods, it can create the risk of radioactive release. The No. 3 reactor's spent fuel included the extremely dangerous MOX.



Banri Kaieda



japantimes Eliminating all nuke power cheapest option: Softbank's Son - ow.ly/dw3lr
13 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite

japantimes Pyongyang: Abductions not on agenda - ow.ly/dw3ln
27 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite

japantimes Japan, North met in secret for months before Beijing talks - ow.ly/dw3ll
42 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite

japantimes Quakes added to eruption risk on Mount Fuji - ow.ly/dw3lk
57 minutes ago · reply · retweet · favorite



Join the conversation

Poll Most read stories Editors' picks

A piece of your mind

Scared or prepared?

The government [upped its casualty estimate for a killer quake-tsunami combo](#) by more than a factor of 10. What's your take?

- Forewarned is forearmed. This information will save lives.**
- All this does is scare people. It's not helpful.**
- It's inspired me to think more seriously about possible evacuation routes.**
- Numbers like these aren't much more than a guess.**

VOTE

Total Votes : 1637

[View past polls](#)

Related links

All reactors linked to outside power

By ALEX MARTIN

Disney to resume some operations

Nearby seawater radioactive

By MASAMI ITO

Tiffany cuts outlook after quake

Identified tsunami dead buried

¥1 trillion insurance cost seen

U.S. no-go zone 'overreaction'

By JUN HONGO

Residents safe: Fukushima adviser

By NATSUKO FUKUE

Asia screening Japan food, other imports

Virginia parents are told the worst

Chubu plant generator moved to high ground

More than 300 interpreters ready to help quake-affected foreigners

Currying flavor: town gets food aid

Crisis 'on verge of stabilizing,' top U.S. nuclear official says

Jittery Tokyo residents trickle back

By ERIC JOHNSTON

U.S., U.K. teachers stay on to help care for evacuees

Updated details on nation's unprecedented natural, nuclear disasters

Rebound hinges on blackouts

Buffett not selling, sees Japan as 'buying opportunity'

 PRINT

 E-MAIL

 **Tweet** 0

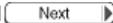
 **Like** 0



We welcome your opinions. Click to send a message to the editor.

The Japan Times
(C) All rights reserved

Article 4 of 14 in National news

 Previous  Next 

[Back to top](#) ▲

[About us](#) | [Work for us](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Link policy](#) | [Registration FAQ](#)
[Advertise](#) in [japantimes.co.jp](#).

This site has been optimized for modern browsers. Please make sure that Javascript is enabled in your browser's preferences.
The Japan Times Ltd. All rights reserved.