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Monju operator said it checked key equipment, but it hadn't

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By HIDEKI MUROYA/ Staff writer

In a startling admission, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency said a series of vital safety checks supposedly carried out at the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in Fukui Prefecture never got done.

The agency had submitted a report to the Nuclear Regulation Authority saying otherwise.

The agency revealed the slip-up on Feb. 7.

“It was our belief that we had indeed carried out the inspections properly,” said Takehide Deshimaru, deputy head at Monju, at a news conference on Feb. 7.

The agency disclosed that it found earlier in the day it had yet to finish checks on five pieces of vital equipment. The problem came to light while officials were creating a check list.

Work needed to be done on an emergency diesel generator and an electromagnetic flow meter for sodium, among other things.

Specifically, the agency failed to test the generator's performance and check the meter.

The watchdog body started questioning officials about the slipshod procedures as soon as the problem was pointed out.

The watchdog body plans to conduct on-the-spot inspections at the Monju facilities and the agency's Tsuruga head office in view of the violation of maintenance regulations.

Late last year, it emerged that the operator had put off checks on 9,847 pieces of equipment, as demanded by internal regulations.

In a final report on the problem submitted to the regulator on Jan. 31, the operator said it had finished checking all of the most important equipment.

By HIDEKI MUROYA/ Staff writer