

Thursday, March 17, 2011

## Seoul to send boron in bid to cool reactors

SEOUL (Kyodo) South Korea plans to transfer its extra reserves of boron to Japan to help its neighbor stabilize quake-damaged nuclear reactors, the government said Wednesday.

State-run Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co., which operates South Korea's 21 commercial reactors, plans to ship the boron in the next few days, Yonhap news agency reported.

Japan asked South Korea to provide the material, which is vital for stopping fission reactions, after its own stockpile was largely used up at the Fukushima power plant.

"Seoul has decided to provide whatever reserves it can spare without jeopardizing local nuclear operations," an official of the Ministry of Knowledge Economy told Yonhap. "Depleted reserves will be restocked once the emergency situation has passed."

Boron is the main material that goes into control rods used to halt or slow fission reactions in nuclear reactors. Japan has mixed large amounts of boron with seawater and poured it into the reactors as an emergency measure.

Meanwhile, South Korea's oil companies said they plan to ship refined petroleum products such as gasoline, diesel and kerosene to Japan after many refineries were forced to shut down due to the devastating quake, according to Yonhap. Companies such as S-Oil Corp., SK Energy Co. and GS Caltex Corp. said they had received requests from Japanese companies, including JX Nippon Oil & Energy Corp., for assistance.

The South Korean government also plans to provide Japan with blankets, mattresses and bottled water, Yonhap said. "The Japanese government requested the supply of the materials," an official was quoted as saying.

Seoul has sent a 102-member team of workers to Japan for search and rescue operations. About 100 additional personnel are on standby to be dispatched if Tokyo asks.

Meanwhile, President Lee Myung Bak told his government Wednesday to painstakingly check the safety of South Korea's four nuclear plants.

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