

# **Fukushima: Diet committee released a scathing report stating that the crisis was “clearly a man-made disaster,”**

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## **Diet nuclear accident report brands Fukushima crisis a ‘man-made disaster’**

A Diet committee investigating the disaster at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant released a scathing report July 5 stating that the crisis was “clearly a man-made disaster,” citing a failure in the nuclear safety process.

In the 641-page report submitted to the heads of both houses of the Diet, the committee criticized government regulatory authorities and the plant’s operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), for failing to implement earthquake and tsunami countermeasures before last year’s magnitude-9.0 temblor despite having numerous opportunities to do so in the past.

Singling out the fundamental cause of the crisis, the report said that TEPCO had formed a cozy relationship with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry and strongly pressured successive generations of regulatory authorities to put off or relax regulations.

“Regulators and the regulated underwent a ‘reversal of roles’, with regulatory authorities becoming ‘captives’ of electricity providers,” the report stated. As a result of this, the functions of the ministry’s Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) as a watchdog of nuclear safety “collapsed,” the report said. It added that TEPCO operated like a “behind-the-scenes fixer,” shifting responsibility onto the shoulders of government administrators while hiding from the line of fire itself.

The report also incorporated the opinion that the massive earthquake — not just the tsunami as earlier reports suggested — may have wiped out backup power at the plant.

An interim report released in December last year by the government’s nuclear investigation and verification committee chaired by Yotaro Hatamura, and a report based on an internal TEPCO probe released in June this year concluded that a loss of backup power due to the tsunami was responsible for the crisis. However, the Diet committee’s report stated that based on factors including the tsunami’s arrival time, it was possible that the loss of backup power for at least the Fukushima plant’s No. 1 reactor was not caused by the tsunami. It added that if the vent to decrease pressure inside the reactor’s pressure vessel had not been activated, “a small-scale accident involving a loss

of the reactor's cooling functions could have occurred due to shaking from the earthquake."

Responding to reports that TEPCO considered pulling its entire staff out from the plant soon after the outbreak of the nuclear disaster, the committee's report stated, "There is no evidence that TEPCO decided internally on a full withdrawal and this is a 'misconception' (by the Prime Minister's Office)." However, it said the misconception could be traced to former TEPCO president Masataka Shimizu's vague communication on the state of the plant, and stated that he lacked autonomy and a sense of responsibility despite being the chief of a private company.

"TEPCO is in no position to criticize misconceptions or excessive intervention by the Prime Minister's Office, as it is chiefly responsible for bringing about this situation," the report said.

The report said that after the outbreak of the accident, the Prime Minister's Office became suspicious of explanations by NISA and TEPCO, and intervened, resulting in confusion because it lacked information. The accident account said this was "the biggest factor in the failure to halt the progress of the disaster and minimize the extent of the damage." It continued, "Politicians in the Prime Minister's Office lacked a true sense of crisis management, and were mistaken over the roles the Prime Minister's Office should play in the crisis."

"The Prime Minister's Office, regulatory authorities and TEPCO management made no provisions and were mentally unprepared, and were unable to stop the damage's spread," it added.

Commenting on then Prime Minister Naoto Kan's visit to the nuclear plant on March 12, 2011, the day after the quake and tsunami, it said, "Rather than boosting morale at the crisis scene, it's possible that he added pressure by venting his irritation."

Based on these conclusions, the report made seven suggestions including Diet monitoring of regulatory authorities, a review of the government's crisis management system, and prerequisites for a new regulatory body.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, July 06, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120706p2a00m0na006000c.html>

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## **Fukushima nuke disaster investigative panel rejects TEPCO tsunami claims**

The final report released by the Diet's Fukushima nuclear disaster investigative panel has concluded that factors other than the tsunami may have triggered the loss of power at the plant, which aggravated the unprecedented disaster.

In its 641-page report released on July 5, the panel said there is no denying that the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant's No. 1 reactor was damaged by the earthquake that struck northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011.

"The primary cause of the disaster should not be attributed to the tsunami alone," the final report said. The report also stated that there is a possibility that the loss of backup power at the plant "may not have been triggered by the tsunami," rejecting the views previously presented by plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) and the government's disaster investigation committee. Because

experts' opinions are divided over the issue, calls may arise for further verification.

The panel analyzed the tsunamis' arrival time at the Fukushima No. 1 plant and concluded that the second tsunami wave reached the backup power at the plant at least two minutes later than the tsunami arrival time claimed by TEPCO. The utility has earlier reported that the second wave reached the plant at 3:35 p.m. on March 11, 2011, but the panel said the actual arrival time was observed from 1.5 kilometers off the coast.

As one of the two emergency power sources for the No. 1 reactor is believed to have already lost function between 3:35 p.m. and 3:36 p.m. — an assumption based on interviews with the plant's workers — the final report concluded that backup power was lost before the second tsunami hit. There are also doubts about whether the damage to the No. 2 and No. 3 reactors is attributable to the tsunami, the report said, calling for further investigation.

While determining that there was no major quake-induced pipe ruptures in the plant's other important safety equipment, the report said the possibility of coolant water having leaked from minute cracks in the No. 1 reactor cannot be ruled out. The report, meanwhile, did not delve into the operations of the nuclear plant, which was elaborated earlier in the report released by the government's disaster investigation committee.

Takashi Sawada, director at the Atomic Energy Society of Japan, was dismissive of the investigative panel's report.

"From an engineering point of view, the report's judgment is insufficient. If pipes were even only slightly damaged, allowing coolant water to leak, the temperatures and pressure inside the reactor containment vessel would be abnormally high. However, the measurement data released by TEPCO does not indicate anything like this between the time the quake occurred and the tsunami arrived. Further verification is necessary," he said.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, July 06, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120706p2a00m0na011000c.html>

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## **Diet panel report cites TEPCO order to Fukushima plant chief to halt pumping seawater**

The Diet investigative panel report on the Fukushima nuclear crisis has revealed the details of a telephone conversation in which a senior official of Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) instructed the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant chief to stop pumping seawater into one of the stricken reactors on the second day of the crisis.

The heated telephone exchange was between plant manager Masao Yoshida and Ichiro Takeguro — a TEPCO employee on an executive fellowship assignment to the prime minister's office — on March 12, 2011. At the time, then Prime Minister Naoto Kan was in discussion with Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan Chairman Haruki Madarame and others over the potential for the seawater to cause recriticality.

"Hey, hey, are you doing that? Stop it!" Takeguro is quoted in the report as telling Yoshida over the

seawater injections.

When Yoshida asked why, Takeguro shouted angrily, "You, don't talk back. The prime minister's office is grumbling."

Yoshida then asked Takeguro, "What are they saying?" After that, the call was cut off, according to the report.

Yoshida was quoted in the report as saying later, "I could have talked if it was (TEPCO) headquarters telling me to stop (pumping seawater), but I couldn't discuss the situation if it was the prime minister's office, a complete bystander, telling me to halt the operation. They just ordered me to stop." He said the call from the prime minister's office was confusing, though he did order the plant workers to continue pumping seawater into the reactor.

The Diet investigative panel report stated that TEPCO paid unnecessary attention to Kan, hampering its response to the nuclear disaster as a result.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, July 06, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120706p2a00m0na010000c.html>

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## **TEPCO report on Fukushima nuke disaster dodges blame, points finger at gov't**

An internal Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) report on the Fukushima nuclear meltdowns released on June 20 heaps blame on the government for worsening the situation, while absolving the firm of nearly all responsibility for the disaster.

Speaking at a news conference on the release of the report, TEPCO Vice President and internal investigative committee chair Masao Yamazaki admitted that there were "some problems" with how the utility responded to the March 2011 meltdowns. Furthermore, the report states that "all parties connected to the disaster, including this company, should reflect deeply on what happened."

However, Yamazaki maintained that TEPCO had "successfully carried out all prescribed procedures" and "employees did everything they could under difficult circumstances." There was trouble with several reactors simultaneously, and it was a very severe situation. Despite a total power failure, aftershocks and multiple tsunami warnings, (TEPCO staff) managed to cope," he added. The document itself traces the release of radioactive materials from the plant — estimated at the equivalent of roughly 900,000 terabecquerels of radioiodine — but does not address whether TEPCO could have done anything to lessen the severity of the disaster.

The report reserved particularly scathing criticism for former Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who visited the stricken plant just a day after the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami triggered the nuclear disaster. Specifically, the report blamed Kan's visit and subsequent contacts with then Fukushima No. 1 plant manager Masao Yoshida for "promoting useless confusion" in the opening days of the crisis.

Yoshida was quoted in the report as saying an "oppressive" Kan was "in a fit of rage and screamed

at me” during a March 15 video conference. “He demanded to know if anyone had run away, and if anyone had, who they were,” Yoshida’s statement read. Kan has repeatedly insisted that TEPCO had hinted it wanted to abandon the plant soon after the crisis began, but the report includes internal documents calling for evacuation of “all but essential emergency personnel,” and concludes the staff was well aware of the need to deal with the meltdowns.

The committee also turned criticism of its “slow” public release of “meager” information on the developing crisis back on the government, concluding that Tokyo had “restricted both the content and the timing of information releases.”

One example quoted was photos of the March 12 hydrogen explosion that blew apart the No. 1 reactor building. The photos were released before reaching the Prime Minister’s Office, which allegedly viewed this as a problem. Then TEPCO President Masataka Shimizu subsequently told TEPCO staff, “From now on, all information goes to the PM’s Office first, and nothing is to be released until we get permission from them.”

The report states that as a result, information on rising pressure in the No. 3 reactor containment vessel on March 14 was released late as TEPCO tried to coordinate with the government.

The pattern of laying blame at the government’s feet repeated itself throughout the TEPCO committee’s findings. For instance, the committee claimed that responsibility for the No. 1 plant’s failed tsunami defenses lay not with the utility, but with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency for “not instructing (TEPCO) to implement anti-tsunami measures immediately” — despite a 2008 government report warning of massive waves.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, June 21, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120621p2a00m0na013000c.html>

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## **TEPCO justifies in nuclear accident report failure to predict huge tsunami**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Tokyo Electric Power Co. on Wednesday, in its final report on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster, admitted it was not sufficiently prepared to deal with tsunami-triggered nuclear accidents, but the utility justified its failure to predict the huge tsunami that hit the complex last year.

The over 10-meter-high tsunami that followed a huge earthquake on March 11, 2011, was “beyond expectations,” the report said, reiterating the company’s earlier view that the larger-than-expected tsunami was the direct cause of the nuclear crisis, while criticizing the government for interfering in its efforts to bring the nuclear complex under control.

The report is a result of a year-long in-house investigation into the world’s worst nuclear accident since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. But it stopped short of digging deeper into the background of why Tokyo Electric could only make insufficient accident assumptions and left unanswered questions about the accident.

As in the interim report issued in December, the utility known as TEPCO maintained the view that

key facilities at the plant withstood the impact of the magnitude 9.0 earthquake, but ensuing tsunami waves flooded electrical equipment and resulted in a loss of power, leading to the failure of reactor cooling systems.

Executive Vice President Masao Yamazaki told a press conference that TEPCO had taken measures to secure safety “to the extent possible,” but the tsunami was on “a scale rare in all history.”

“Looking back, precautions were not sufficient,” he said.

The report also said that not only the utility, but “people concerned in nuclear issues as a whole” were not able to predict that an event largely exceeding their expectations could occur, apparently referring to government bodies and experts involved in issuing assessments on the height of tsunami that could hit the plant.

Responding to criticism that staffers may have not had sufficient understanding of an emergency cooling system at the No. 1 unit called an isolation condenser, TEPCO insisted that they had been receiving training and had sufficient knowledge.

TEPCO, meanwhile, turned its fire on the government’s response in the early stage of the nuclear crisis, saying that “unnecessary confusion” was caused for those on the front line by the interference of then Prime Minister Naoto Kan and other people at his office.

Such government behavior “only put the nuclear power plant chief in a dilemma and did not contribute to improve” the situation, it said.

The company’s communications activities related to the crisis were also restricted because it had to seek approval from the prime minister’s office and the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency before making announcements to the public, the report added.

TEPCO said it interviewed around 600 people who were involved in dealing with the crisis, which resulted in the meltdowns of the Nos.1 to 3 reactors at the plant.

The No. 2 reactor is believed to have leaked massive radioactive substances that seriously contaminated areas northwest of the Fukushima plant, although a hydrogen explosion did not take place inside the reactor building. But the report did not specify areas that were damaged.

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<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120621p2g00m0dm016000c.html>

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