

Japan PM: No individual to blame for Fukushima

March 3 2012, by Huw Griffith



Journalists in protective clothing visit the stricken Fukushima nuclear power plant this week. No individual can be held responsible for the nuclear meltdowns at Fukushima, Japan's prime minister said Saturday, insisting everyone had to "share the pain".

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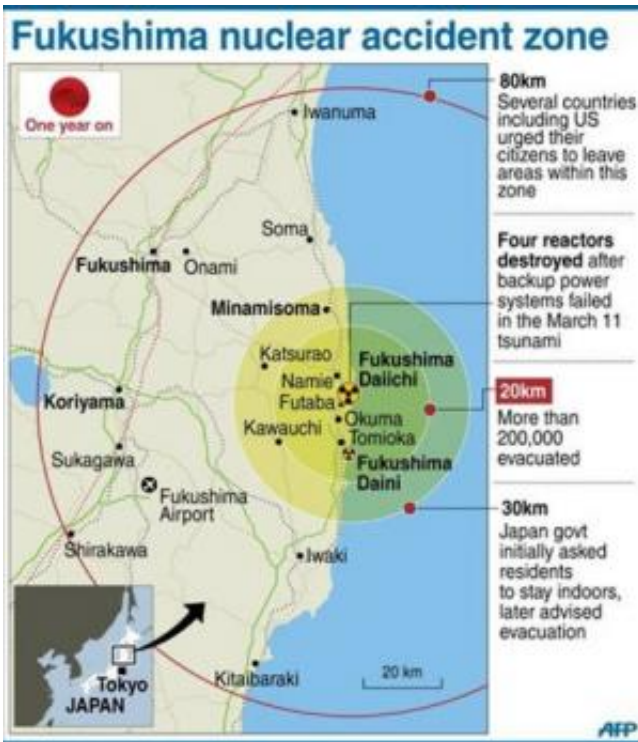
A week ahead of the anniversary of the disaster, the premier swatted away a question over [criminal responsibility](#) for meltdowns that forced tens of thousands of people from their homes and polluted the land and sea.

"Of course, the primary responsibility under Japanese law rests with the operator" of the stricken plant, [Tokyo Electric Power \(TEPCO\)](#), Noda said.

"But the government as well as operators and academia were steeped too deeply in the safety myth and I think that is what we can conclude.

"Rather than blaming any individual person I believe everyone has to share the pain of responsibility and learn this lesson."

Noda's comments come just days after an independent investigation panel revealed the president of TEPCO had wanted to abandon the plant in the days after the tsunami swamped its [reactor cooling systems](#).



Map showing the impact of the explosions at the Fukushima nuclear power plant after the Tsunami a year ago. Japanese PM Yoshihiko Noda told foreign journalists in Tokyo that the Japanese establishment had been taken in by the "myth of safety" around nuclear power and was unprepared for a disaster on the scale of last March's accident.

A report compiled by private thinktank Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation said it was only threats by then prime minister Naoto Kan that had prevented TEPCO from leaving the plant to its fate as the accident spiralled out of control.

Noda told reporters lessons had been and were still being learned from Fukushima, including "don't install power sources outside which are likely to be hit by a tsunami".

All but two of Japan's 54 nuclear reactors are presently offline, with

local communities unwilling to allow them to restart amid a public backlash over the safety of a once-trusted technology.

Noda said electricity-hungry Japan would diversify its power sources, but stopped short of pledging to abandon [atomic energy](#).

"We have to grow out of our dependence on nuclear and we have to establish in the medium to longer term a society that does not have to rely on nuclear power generation," he said.

"We need to think about the best mix of energy that will give a sense of reassurance to the Japanese people. Some time in the middle of this year we would like to set the direction for this strategy."

The [prime minister](#), who came to power almost exactly six months ago, said a year on from the tsunami that claimed 19,000 lives and left hundreds of thousands of people homeless, progress in righting Japan was being made.

But he acknowledged things were not moving as fast as they could.

"Unfortunately there is criticism that what we have done has been inadequate and we have been slow," he said. "We have to be receptive to such criticism."

He said recovery work was well under way, but that reconstruction would continue "intensively" for five years and should be complete in a decade.

"When it comes to reconstruction in areas seriously hit by the tsunami there is debate over whether they have to move to higher ground," he said.

"I think that local residents have to discuss and decide...and time is needed for that."

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