

Third Koizumi Cabinet Is Launched

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reshuffled his cabinet on October 31, creating his third cabinet since first taking office in 2001. Nuclear-related ministers who were appointed in the latest reshuffling included Kenji Kosaka of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Toshihiro Nikai of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and Iwao Matsuda, Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy.



MEXT Minister Kosaka

On the 31st, after the first meeting of the new cabinet, MEXT Minister Kenji Kosaka gave a press conference at Ministry offices, at which he pledged he would “devote all my strength to the enhancement of Japan’s learning and science.” Referring to the outstanding issues of the reform of compulsory education and revisions to the basic plan for science and technology, he demonstrated his ardor for developing human resources, laying out the twin goals of “cultivating the personnel – from preschool to higher-level education – who will shoulder the responsibilities of the 21st century,” and “fostering the human resources who will open up a bright future for Japan, a country lacking in natural resources.”

As far as nuclear power is concerned, Kosaka stressed the need to carry out research on proper disposal methods for radioactive wastes, along with improvements in safety and stability, given that nuclear power now accounts for some 30% of Japan’s entire electricity supply. Regarding the forthcoming revision in the basic plan for science and technology, he stated his position of desiring to engage in the promotion of the cultivation of practical and strategic science and technology, enhancing basic research while creating innovations in industrial technology.

After the investiture ceremony, new METI Minister Toshihiro Nikai made his first visit to Ministry offices in his ministerial capacity, and gave a press conference. He stated that Prime Minister Koizumi had requested him “to work hard to secure the safety of nuclear power plants, and gain the public trust thereof.” He pledged his determination to work wholeheartedly as minister in the governance of nuclear policy.



METI Minister Nikai

Meanwhile, new State Minister for Science and Technology Policy Iwao Matsuda expressed his ambitions by saying, “Science and technology are the greatest determiners of Japan’s survival from now on, and we need to redouble our efforts.” He also stated his eagerness to promote reforms in sci-tech policy, declaring, “The central role in science and technology ought to be transferred from the public sector to the private.” He went on to say, “I would like to develop a framework in which the private sector can demonstrate its capabilities.”

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