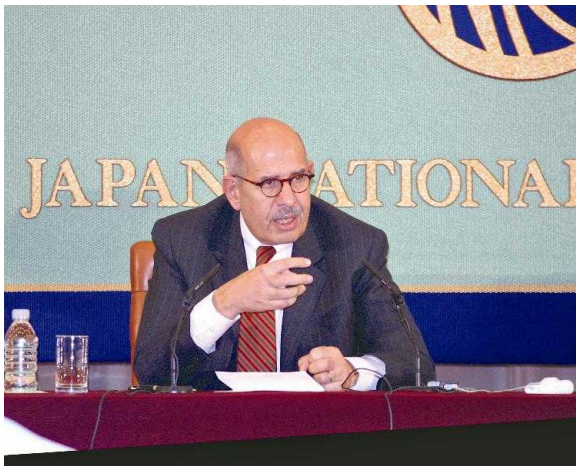


IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei Visits Japan

On December 1, Director General Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) paid a visit to Japan on the behest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and held a press conference at the Japan Reporters' Club in the Press Center Building in Tokyo.



Speaking to the reporters, he said that the largest problem that the IAEA currently faces is the suspicion that Iran is developing nuclear weapons. He said that while Iran claims its uranium enrichment is for the purpose of peaceful utilization, “ We have not yet reached the stage where that can be trusted. ”

Concerning the proposal by the IAEA to create a multinational management framework for nuclear fuel, ElBaradei said, “ Some misunderstandings still exist, ” adding that it is first important to guarantee a supply of nuclear fuel. He asserted, “ It is something like a fuel bank, but not virtual in nature. The IAEA will

manage it, and will extend a supply when the need arises. ”

The next stage, he explained, would be the construction of a multinational facility and its management. He said although that he believed that international management was preferable in the long run, similar concepts have existed for several decades now without being realized. Amidst heightened interest worldwide toward nuclear power, the need for such a bank has once again grown, he stated.

As for the nuclear tests by North Korea – the only country to have joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) regime and later to withdraw and conduct such tests – he said that “ it is a fact that the nonproliferation regime has receded. He continued by saying, “ We must first stop further nuclear tests. North Korea ought to abandon all of its nuclear weapons and return to the NPT regime. ” To that end, he said that it was extremely important for the IAEA to carry out inspections, returning to the pre-2002 situation with permanent IAEA inspectors in that country.

Concerning the agreement between India and the United States to cooperate in the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy, Chairman ElBaradei was asked whether it would send the wrong message to North Korea, namely, that it may some day be all right to conduct nuclear tests. He responded by saying, “ I have supported the Indian-U.S. arrangement even before the recent announcement by the two countries. ” He explained his position by saying that providing modern technology to India, the world's largest democracy, would help rescue half a billion people from poverty, giving them hope and the right to live as human beings. He added that he doubted whether any country would leave the NPT regime on account of the agreement.

At any rate, he stressed that “ Dialogue is necessary, and there are no standard solutions. ”

ElBaradei confirms strengthened cooperation with Japan

On November 30 and December 1, IAEA Director General ElBaradei conferred in succession with Katsuei Hirasawa, Senior Vice-Minister for Science and Technology Policy, Akira Amari, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Bunmei Ibuki, Minister of Education, Culture,

Sports, Science and Technology, among others. In his talks, he reiterated his belief that cooperative relations with Japan will continue to strengthen, so that the world can enjoy the benefits of nuclear energy to the fullest extent.

In his conference with Minister Hirasawa, Chairman Shunsuke Kondo of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) also participated. As part of the celebrations of IAEA's 50th year since its establishment, a symposium will be held next April in Aomori, and confirmation was made of the AEC's cooperation with that. Also, opinions were exchanged over the North Korean nuclear problem, and they shared the recognition that it was an urgent and serious problem.

Also, the Director General met with executives of Japan Atomic Industrial Forum (JAIF), telling them his opinion that "Japan, too, ought to promote the export of nuclear power plants."

Editor: Noriyuki Ishii, JAIF