

## Prime Minister Fukuda Forms New Cabinet

On September 25, the newly-chosen head of the Liberal Democratic Party, Yasuo Fukuda, was elected Prime Minister through a vote of the Lower House of the Japanese Diet, and he initiated his new cabinet on the same day. Those ministers with a bearing on nuclear-related affairs include Minister Kisaburo Tokai of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and Minister Akira Amari of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). Tokai is new to the post, while Amari is a holdover from the Abe administration. Other holdovers in cabinet-level posts in the Cabinet Office include Minister Shinya Izumi for Disaster Management and Food Safety and Minister Fumio Kishida for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs, Science and Technology Policy, Quality-of-Life Policy, and Regulatory Reform. Both men are considered “ministers of state.”

On September 26, Minister Tokai paid his first visit to the MEXT ministerial offices, saying at a press conference held there that “I pledge to do the best of my ability”. He enthusiastically



MEXT Minister Tokai

outlined his plans, saying he would build upon his previous experience to work for the steady promotion of a “revival of education” and the country's development, adding that “I have devoted my life to science and technology.” Before assuming his present post, Tokai had served as parliamentary undersecretary for science and technology, as well as MEXT vice minister. He also chaired a preparatory conference before the launching of the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA). Asked about how he would go about reinforcing Japan's national strength in science and technology, Tokai said, “People are the most important. We must properly groom new researchers and engineers. In order to “create an environment amenable to research, he touched upon his plans to review the independent administrative industries under MEXT's purview, emphasizing that fields that were already strong would be reinforced, while those found lacking would be rebuilt.

Meanwhile, the reappointed METI Minister Amari also spoke before the press on the afternoon of September 26, after the first cabinet meeting under Prime Minister Fukuda, announcing that revised checks of nuclear power plants (NPPs), reflecting revised seismic guidelines, would be completed at the earliest possible convenience. He also explained that at the occasion of his reappointment, the new prime minister had directed him to work for (1) the revitalization of small and medium-sized companies and local economies, (2) the stable supply of resources, and (3) the assurance of safety and peace of mind concerning nuclear energy. On that basis, he stressed, “The other day, a report was released on the investigation of data from the Niigata Chuetsu Offshore Earthquake, concluding that basic safety of all NPPs could be secured. I would like to see the updated checks on NPPs, now underway, completed as soon as possible. While some efforts have already begun, measures need to be taken to show the siting communities and the Japanese people as a whole that the nation's NPPs can deal with earthquakes with a lot of room to spare.”



METI Minister Amari

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