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WALLY SANTANA/AP

Residents evacuated from areas surrounding the Fukushima nuclear facility comfort each other on Sunday during a check for radiation contamination in Koriyama, Japan.

Several Japanese reactors compromised; tens of thousands evacuated from area

BY ERIC TALMADGE AND MARI YAMAGUCHI
The Associated Press

KORIYAMA, Japan — Japan's nuclear crisis intensified Sunday as authorities raced to combat the threat of multiple reactor meltdowns and more than 180,000 people evacuated the quake- and tsunami-savaged northeastern coast where fears spread over possible radioactive contamination.

Nuclear plant operators were frantically trying to keep temperatures down in a series of nuclear reactors — including one where officials feared a partial meltdown could be happening Sunday — to prevent the disaster from growing worse.

But hours after officials announced the latest dangers to face the troubled Fukushima Dai-

ichi nuclear complex, including the possibility of a second explosion in two days, there were few details about what was being done to bring the situation under control.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano said Sunday that a hydrogen explosion could occur at the complex's Unit 3, the latest reactor to face a possible meltdown.

That would follow a hydrogen blast Saturday in the plant's Unit 1, where operators attempted to prevent a meltdown by injecting sea water into it.

"At the risk of raising further public concern, we cannot rule out the possibility of an explosion," Edano said. "If there is an explosion, however, there would be no significant impact on human health."

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Kyodo News/AP

A police officer prays in front of a blanket-wrapped body found on Sunday in the rubble in Sendai, Japan.

- American rescue teams arrive in Japan
- Radiation fears lead to quarantine
- Most U.S. bases return to normalcy

Full coverage,
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