

Fukushima : France rushes 95 tonnes of boron to Japan

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PARIS, March 17, 2011 (AFP) - France on Thursday will send a plane carrying 95 tonnes of boron, an element that dampens radiation, to help Japan tackle the crisis at the Fukushima power plant, Energy and Industry Minister Eric Besson said.

A first plane carrying 95 tonnes of boron was leaving early Thursday, Besson told France 2 television. He did not specify whether the plane was carrying boron, an element that absorbs neutrons, in powder or liquid form.

Besson said that France had offered the boron on Saturday, the day after Japan's biggest earthquake on record struck but "either they didn't think it was useful or they didn't have the time to reply." Japanese military helicopters were on Thursday dumping tonnes of water onto the Fukushima plant in a bid to cover nuclear fuel rods stored in a deep tank.

Water levels in the pool have fallen to dangerous levels through evaporation, exposing the fuel rods to the risk of a temperature rise that could cause them to catch fire.

