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Saturday, Dec. 8, 2012

MHI rolls out nuclear crisis robot

Jiji

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. has unveiled a remotely controlled robot capable of working at nuclear and other disaster sites.

The MHI-MEISTeR robot has seven cameras and two arms equipped with replaceable tools that allow it to cut pipe, collect concrete and perform other tasks.

The robot was designed to work inside the radioactive reactor buildings at the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

The robot, 1.3 meters high and weighing some 440 kg, has caterpillar tracks that allow it to travel over unstable ground and climb steps. Its central processing unit and precision devices are protected by a radiation-absorbing filter.

Mitsubishi Heavy began developing robots for use in nuclear disasters following the deadly 1999 criticality accident at JCO Co., a uranium processing facility in Tokai, Ibaraki Prefecture.

Jinichi Miyaguchi, head of MHI's division for nuclear power-related device designs, said the Fukushima plant needs more than just monitoring robots.

The company plans to develop more replaceable tools when required, he said Thursday.

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