The manager of the Fukushima nuclear power plant told reporters that certain areas of the facility damaged in a 2011 earthquake and tsunami are not under the control of the plant operator, the Reuters news agency reported.

“It’s embarrassing to admit, but there are certain parts of the site where we don’t have full control,” Akira Ono, the Fukushima plant manager, told reporters touring the Tokyo Electric and Power Co. (TEPCO) facility last week.

The comment was made in relation to a recent incident in which highly radioactive water was mistakenly pumped into the wrong building at the plant site, an incident that was not fully understood for more than 48 hours.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who visited Buenos Aires last September to promote Japan’s bid to host the 2020 Olympic games, told Olympic officials that the situation at the plant was under control. Japan has said it will spend half a billion dollars to decommission the facility.

“We need to improve the quality of the tanks and other facilities so that they can survive for the next 30 to 40 years of our decommission period,” Ono said, according to Reuters, reflecting that the problem is long-term.
The plant manager said that many problems stemmed from the fact that after the plant was damaged, the company was forced to build tanks and water management facility in a hurry and “may not have paid enough attention to quality. We need to improve quality from here.”

Fukushima, 220 km northeast of Tokyo, suffered three reactor core meltdowns after being damaged in the earthquake and tsunami. The water is used to cool the molten reactor cores and is at the center of the clean-up effort.

In order to deal with the water problem, the government says it will help fund a filtration system to clear the water of nuclides except for less noxious tritium, build an underground ice wall and erect more storage tanks, Reuters said.