

Nuclear policy panel calls for Monju restart

About time despite comments by the lunatic fringe from the intervenors and Kyushu University.

The Japan Times
January 30, 2005

A governmental panel on nuclear policy is saying that the trouble-plagued Monju fast-breeder reactor should be put back into operation as soon as possible, according to panel members.

In a meeting Friday to review the nation's long-term policy, a committee of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission also proposed verifying whether it is reliable to use the Monju reactor as a power generation facility within 10 years after it resumes operations, the panel members said.

The Monju reactor, located in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, has been shut down since 1995 after a sodium coolant leak sparked a fire.

The panel proposed that technology be pursued that can effectively handle the sodium.

The proposals were made as the commission endorsed an existing long-term nuclear energy plan under which the government wants to develop a fast-breeder reactor, with the Monju project at the core of Japan's nuclear fuel cycle policy.

Despite the commission's decision to call for Monju's early resumption, some members expressed skepticism.

Hideyuki Ban, a joint head of the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, said the commission needs to examine whether seeking a fast-breeder reactor is a viable option for the nation's future nuclear policy.

Hitoshi Yoshioka, a professor at Kyushu University, said there is a need to evaluate whether the resumption of the Monju reactor is cost-effective.