

## No objection raised to plutonium-mix nuclear power plan in Ehime+

*Great news*

Japan Economic Newswire (Kyodo)  
March 1, 2006

The safety examination panel of the governmental Nuclear Safety Commission of Japan approved a plan Wednesday to use fuel mixed with uranium and plutonium for a nuclear power plant in Ehime Prefecture, panel officials said.

Some questions were raised about data confirming the safety of Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s plan for the No. 3 reactor of the Ikata nuclear power plant and a request was made to provide documents on quake activities around the plant.

The panel is expected to work out its opinions on the so-called pluthermal project for the regional utility by the next round of talks, the officials said.

Pluthermal, or plutonium-thermal power generation, burns plutonium-uranium mixed oxide fuel, or MOX, made from spent fuel at nuclear reactors.

Shikoku Electric plans to use MOX fuel at the 890,000-kilowatt pressurized-water reactor but is planning to keep the MOX quota at less than a quarter of the total fuel the reactor would require and fill the remainder with regular uranium fuel.

Shikoku Electric applied for government approval in November 2004 with the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency of the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry.

The agency, after determining the plan meets its criteria, asked in July 2005 for further evaluation by two other governmental entities -- the Nuclear Safety Commission to examine disaster preparedness and technical suitability, and the Atomic Energy Commission to verify whether the project meets Japan's basic policy and peaceful nuclear energy use principle.

No MOX plans have so far been put into practice in Japan, but a project by Kyushu Electric Power Co. at its Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture is setting the pace.

The government approved the MOX plan at the No. 3 reactor of the Genkai plant in September last year after the Nuclear Safety Commission and the Atomic Energy Commission approved it in August.

Saga Gov. Yasushi Furukawa told the Saga prefectural assembly on Feb. 21 of the prefectural government's plan to endorse it.

The Japanese government hopes to have 16 to 18 pluthermal reactors by fiscal 2010, but as other power utilities' pluthermal plans have hit snags, it remains uncertain if that goal can be achieved.