

Japan N-plant: what to do of Monju?

Wednesday 2 November 2011, by [Kyodo News](#) (Date first published: 31 October 2011).

Contents

- [Monju focus to shift to \(...\)](#)
- [Gov't cost-cutting unit to \(...\)](#)

Monju focus to shift to research

The Japan Atomic Energy Agency, which runs the troubled Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in Fukui Prefecture, will shift the project's focus to research from the current goal of generating power, its president has indicated.

JAEA President Atsuyuki Suzuki said the plan to build a demonstration fast-breeder reactor and subsequently a commercial one after Monju will be very hard for the public to accept.

The reactor and related research had been touted as key to achieving the goal of a fuel cycle, in which spent nuclear fuel from Japanese power plants would be reprocessed for reuse as plutonium-uranium mixed oxide, or MOX, fuel. The fast-breeder reactor aimed to produce more fuel than consumed by using MOX, and practical operations were planned for around 2050.

But the Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry said in September it will postpone Monju's trial run to allay public concerns over its safety amid the triple meltdown crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

The government is poised to "discuss every possibility" about Monju, including its decommissioning, at the Government Revitalization Unit's screening of wasteful spending to be held in late November, an official source said separately.

Noting that resource-poor Japan could run out of energy in the future, the JAEA chief said: "If we can master the use of a fast-breeder reactor, it will enhance our national strength. So we should do the minimum needed (to establish fast-breeder technology)." At this point, I think there are more factors concerning research and development in the way we use Monju," Suzuki said, mentioning possible new research purposes such as burning new types of fuel and reducing the amount of waste generated.

Kyodo Press, October 31, 2011

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20111031a4.html>

Gov't cost-cutting unit to study Monju reactor's abolition

TOKYO (Kyodo) — A government panel tasked with cutting wasteful spending will examine whether the trouble-hit Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor should be decommissioned when it screens government projects in late November, sources familiar with the matter said Friday.

The Government Revitalization Unit will take up the issue, among other topics, amid growing calls for decommissioning the reactor in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear crisis triggered by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, the sources said.

The Monju reactor in Fukui Prefecture and related research have been regarded as key to realizing Japan's nuclear fuel cycle, in which spent nuclear fuel from power plants would be reprocessed for reuse as plutonium-uranium mixed oxide, or MOX, fuel.

The reactor project, on which the country has so far spent around 940 billion yen, has been hobbled by a series of problems. The reactor first achieved criticality in 1994 but was shut down because of a sodium coolant leakage and resulting fire in 1995.

The reactor resumed operation in May last year after being idled for 14 years and five months, but after experiencing trouble in August last year, the launch of full operations was delayed.

As the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant has made it difficult, if not impossible, to build new nuclear power plants, the government panel will also review subsidies for localities with atomic power plants as well as functions of related entities such as the Japan Atomic Energy Agency, the sources said.

Kyodo Press, October 22, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/10/22/20111022p2g00m0dm013000c.html>
