

Oral Pleadings for Monju Scheduled in March

On December 2, the Supreme Court announced that it had decided to accept the government's appeal concerning the shutdown of the fast breeder reactor (FBR) Monju, and scheduled oral pleadings from both the government and the plaintiffs for March 17, 2005. Monju (280MW) has been shut down ever since a sodium leak occurred in its secondary piping in December 1995.

The Monju lawsuit was originally filed by local residents, who want the nullification of the original permission for the facility's installation. In March 2000, they were turned down by the Fukui District Court, which ruled that "there was neither a serious or palpable defect in the safety examination." However, the Kanazawa Branch of the Nagoya High Court ruled in their favor in January 2003, claiming "there had been a serious malpractice and defect in the process of the safety evaluation."

Following the ruling, the government filed an appeal, saying: (1) the Kanazawa Branch judged the safety examination illegal using impractical assumptions, (2) its judgment goes against the Supreme Court ruling in September 1992 giving permission to install the reactor, and (3) no palpable explanation was given about the breach of law, and so forth.

Upon receiving the news about the oral pleadings scheduled for March 17, the Japan Nuclear Cycle Development Institute (JNC), the owner of Monju, released the following comment: "We would like to strive further to gain the understanding of the local people to resume operations at Monju."

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