

Ehime Prefectural Assembly Approves MOX Use at Ikata-3

At a plenary session on October 6, the Ehime prefectural assembly passed a resolution endorsing the program by the Shikoku Electric Power Co. to use MOX fuel at its Ikata-3 NPS (PWR, 890MW). The Ikata town assembly had previously made a similar decision. Ehime Gov. Moriyuki Kato and Ikata Mayor Kazuhiko Yamashita are expected to meet soon for talks and express the intentions of their constituencies, which will be conveyed to the power utility.

The prefectural resolution, which had been put forward by a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), called for the promotion of the program on the grounds that the prefectural committee for environmental safety management at the Ikata NPS had, in its published opinion, already confirmed the safety of the reactor. The resolution itself requests additionally, among other things, the confirmation of seismic safety, the promotion of local development, and the move of Shikoku Electric's nuclear headquarters to the prefecture. The assembly's vote on the resolution was 41 in favor, five against and two abstaining. The LDP had argued in favor of the program, while the Communist Party and environmentalists had opposed it.

After the vote, Gov. Kato said, "The view of the assembly will be a major factor in the prefecture's decision. We will wait for the final decision of Ikata Town, and then announce our own conclusion."

Mayor of Ikata Approves MOX Program As Well

On October 10, Mayor Kazuhiko Yamashita of Ikata Town met with Akira Amari, head of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), to request items in association with the MOX-use program at Ikata-3, including safety assurance and support for local development. In response, Minister Amari said, "The Ministry will pay the closest attention to safety, and will also work actively on local development through the effective use of subsidies, and so forth." After the meeting, Yamashita, whose visit took place before making his final decision on the program for the municipality, said, "The minister showed a strong commitment, which I will convey to the governor. I personally intend to agree."

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