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CHEMICALS PETROLEUM

PCB use for 'closed type' of products will be virtually halted

The Ministry of International Trade & Industry has called for a near total halt to use in Japan of polychlorinate biphenyl (PCB) for "closed" kinds of industrial application in case makers cannot their retrieve electric components using PCB.

PCB lately has come to be regarded as a dreaded chemical pollutant.

According to the Ministry, the stoppage, called for through a notification, will result in an almost complete ruling out of the use of PCB for industrial purposes in Japan.

By its two earlier notifications of the kind respectively in February and December, last year, the Ministry halted all domestic use of PCB for applications, such as for making duplicating paper, paints and adhesives —"open" type. Production and shipments of PCB for such purpose are now completely stopped.

Now producible and salable is only that kind of PCB that is used in making big transformers and other electric apparatus, such as those of electric power companies and railway systems which are under control for maintenance and retrieval for burning and other disposal.

PCB in them will thus be prevented from finding its way into the seas and other water bodies to pollute human foods.

The Ministry's new step has been prompted by the recent medical findings that the breast milk of 15 mothers in Osaka contained 0.7 parts per million (ppm) of PCB.

Of Japan's only two PCB makers, Kanegafuchi Chemical Industry Co. and Mitsubishi Monsanto Chemical Co., Kanegafuchi recently said that in the face of strong customer demand, it could not stop its entire PCB production, immediately. There is no good dielectric substitute, it added.

Mitsubishi Monsanto said it is advancing the date of its planned total stoppage of its PCB production scheduled for May or June.

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