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# Hero or Villain? Japanese methane hydrate tests focus hopes and concerns for a potential new source of gas

In February a Japanese government-funded research programme achieved first production of natural gas from subsea methane hydrates marking an important breakthrough in a scheme it has been actively pursuing since 1995. While the process is still very much in an experimental phase rather than anything approximating viable commercial operations, Japan has placed a high priority on it as methane hydrates may well come to represent the country's only major indigenous energy source. Gas Matters examines the commercial potential of the so-called "fire ice" and why it is so important for the country as methane hydrates are sometimes called.



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