

Japan proposes nuclear power cooperation to Saudi Arabia

The Associated Press

ABU DHABI, Feb. 10 (Kyodo) — Japan's trade and industry minister Toshimitsu Motegi on Saturday proposed providing Saudi Arabia with a range of assistance for the construction of nuclear power plants.

During a meeting in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh with vice head of King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy, Waleed Hussain Abulfaraj, Motegi suggested that the two countries sign a document to that end at an early date, according to Japanese officials.

The proposal by Motegi is believed to be the first time the Japanese government has demonstrated a clear intention to help Saudi Arabia in introducing nuclear power since the 2011 Fukushima disaster.

During the meeting, the vice president of the energy agency expressed hope to use Japan's technology as Saudi Arabia is planning to construct 16 nuclear power reactors by 2030 to cover 20 percent of its electricity needs, according to the officials from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Saudi Arabia plans to build nuclear power plants to deal with possible electricity shortages stemming from population growth and to conserve crude oil resources.

Japan and Saudi Arabia have yet to conclude a nuclear cooperation pact, which is necessary for Tokyo to allow the export of nuclear technology.

One of the officials said that such a pact will require some time even if the two countries manage to sign a document aimed at facilitating such means as training Saudis in nuclear power generation technology.

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