

Japan asks Turkey to proceed with talks on nuclear plant deal

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TOKYO (Kyodo) — Japan asked Turkey on Tuesday to continue with talks on a nuclear power plant deal in the latter country, while confirming with the United States plans to strengthen technical cooperation on nuclear power between the two countries.

The move came during talks between Japan's industry and trade minister, Yukio Edano, and his counterparts from Turkey and the United States in Paris on the sidelines of a ministerial meeting of the International Energy Agency.

The latest overtures signal Tokyo's willingness to pursue the export of nuclear power technology, as a way to shore up Japan's fragile economy, while seeking to reduce its nuclear dependence domestically in the aftermath of its worst nuclear disaster in March.

Since last December, Ankara has given two Japanese companies — Toshiba Corp. and Tokyo Electric Power Co. — priority rights to negotiate a deal to build a nuclear power plant in Turkey.

But following the devastating accident at its Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, Tokyo Electric Power signaled in July its intention to withdraw from the talks. The focus is thus on whether Turkey would continue with the talks.

At the meeting on Tuesday, Edano asked Turkey's energy minister, Taner Yildiz, to move the talks forward. "I would like you to continue (to positively) evaluate Japan's technology," he said.

Yildiz indicated that he would consider the matter in a forward-looking manner, the officials said.

During another meeting, U.S. Energy Secretary Steven Chu pressed Edano to explain Tokyo's stance on its atomic energy policy in the wake of the nuclear disaster.

Edano told his U.S. counterpart that Japan intends to make use of its technology and knowledge of nuclear power in the international arena, while reducing its dependence on nuclear power plants for electricity generation at home.

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