

## Japan Concludes Memorandum with Kazakhstan for Cooperation on Nuclear Energy

On August 28, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan, on a visit to Kazakhstan in Central Asia, signed a memorandum in the capital of Astana together with Kazakh President N. Nazarbayev concerning the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy.

The memorandum welcomes the agreement to allow private Japanese firms to participate in the uranium mine development project in Kazakhstan, and says that necessary steps would be taken toward realizing the joint development of uranium mines in the future, along with the provision of fuel processing services to the Japanese market. A regular exchange of opinions will be conducted for that purpose in order to organize the necessary legal foundation.

Moreover, the memorandum states that necessary measures will be taken toward implementing personnel exchanges between the two countries, as well as a regular dialogue between experts and related institutions toward the introduction of light water reactors (LWRs) in Kazakhstan in the future.

In addition, the memorandum clearly states that "negotiations will begin for the conclusion of a bilateral cooperative agreement once both parties have reached the understanding that the situation is appropriate."

Kazakhstan boasts the world's second greatest uranium reserves after Australia. In January of this year, a contract was concluded for a new project to develop uranium mines in that country, with a 65% stake held by the Kazakhstan National Atomic Company (Kazatomprom), a 25% stake by the Sumitomo Corporation, and a 10% stake by the Kansai Electric Power Co.

Also on August 28, the two countries released a joint statement in which Japan said that it would welcome around 2,000 researchers and exchange students from the Central Asian region over the next three years.

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