

Japan's nuclear pacts with 4 countries to take effect in January

Sunday 11 December 2011, by [Mainichi Shimbun](#), [Yomiuri Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 9 November 2011).

The House of Councillors approved Japan's bilateral civil nuclear cooperation accords with Jordan, Vietnam, South Korea and Russia in a plenary session on Dec. 9, ratifying the closely watched pacts in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

The upper house's move came three days after the House of Representatives took similar action. The Diet's ratification of the nuclear agreements with the four countries means that the pacts will go into effect as early as January and help spur Tokyo's drive to promote exports of civilian nuclear technology and boost the domestic economy.

The four countries have also already approved their pacts with Japan.

At the same time, the government of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda is championing a campaign to reduce Japan's dependence on nuclear power in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear crisis, and it is not clear how much the government can help domestic firms to promote exports of civilian nuclear technology.

Japan had initially signed the bilateral accords before January this year but the Fukushima crisis triggered by the March 11 megaquake and tsunami delayed the Diet's ratification. The nuclear accident is forcing nuclear power-related firms to lower their expectations.

Toshiba Corp. had projected to boost sales of nuclear businesses from about 580 billion yen in the business year ending in March 2011 to 1 trillion yen in the business year ending in March 2016. But Toshiba says there will be a delay of several years in achieving the target. Hitachi Ltd. had hoped to double its annual nuclear business turnover to 380 billion yen in the business year ending March 2021 from the business year ending in March 2011 but was forced to trim the sales target to 360 billion yen in June.

Meanwhile, the construction of nuclear power plants and the expansion of existing plants are picking up speed in emerging countries.

Jordan has decided to build a nuclear power plant and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. is vying with Russian and Canadian firms for an order to build the plant. The Jordanian government says it will choose a single firm with preferential negotiating rights between January and March next year. The Japanese parliamentary action comes just before the Jordanian decision.

"We had anticipated the civilian nuclear accord's approval during the current session of the Diet," a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries official said.

Hitachi won preferential negotiating rights from Lithuania in July to build a nuclear power station. Toshiba is exporting large equipment for a new type of nuclear reactor after its subsidiary, Westinghouse Electric Co., won the order.

Vietnam has also decided to build nuclear power plants, and Toshiba, Hitachi and Mitsubishi Heavy

Industries are trying to win orders.

But the Japanese government's support for these firms' efforts to export nuclear equipment and technology is waning. The government is encouraging the Japan Bank for International Cooperation to utilize its loan and guarantee programs to back the Japanese firms. But sales pitches by Japanese government leaders hold the key to winning orders in emerging countries.

The government's projected review of its energy policy next summer is expected to reflect a lessening of the nation's dependence on nuclear power. "It is difficult for the prime minister to be at the forefront of promoting exports of nuclear technology," says a senior official of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

* *Mainichi Shimbun*, December 9, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/09/20111209p2a00m0na010000c.html>

World expectations high for Japan's N-technology

The government's maintaining the policy of promoting the nuclear power plant exports, even after the outbreak of the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, is believed to reflect the ability of Japanese nuclear technology to support world energy demands, which is increasing the expectations of the international community.

Seamless reactor pressure vessels are manufactured at a Japan Steel Works Ltd. plant in Muroran, Hokkaido, out of a 600-ton steel ingot, in a process dubbed by a senior official of the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry as "indispensable for building large state-of-the-art reactors." Japanese firms also enjoy a share of 30 to 40 percent of the coolant pump and steam generator market.

To meet rapidly increasing energy demand, India has been actively working to import nuclear power plants, and U.S., Russian and French companies have already agreed to build reactors in the country.

However, only Russia can build nuclear power plants using their own technology.

The United States and France will face difficulties building cutting-edge reactors in India if an India-Japan nuclear agreement is not ratified, as they will be unable to use Japanese components in India.

Expectations for Japanese technology are high in other nations as well. When a senior Foreign Ministry official visited Jordan on Sept. 29 for a tour of a planned nuclear power plant site, a Jordanian official reportedly said the country admires Japan's advanced technology. He indicated he wants to incorporate the lessons of the Fukushima nuclear crisis in its nuclear program.

There are views within the government that Japan "can enhance its presence," as a senior Foreign Ministry official put it, "through involvement in nuclear power plant construction abroad." The government therefore also believes nuclear plant exports are effective in terms of diplomatic strategy.

Yomiuri Shimbun, December 6, 2011

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T111205005014.htm>
