Japan set to extend 1.6 billion yen in aid to Myanmar to help with electric power shortage

Japan is set to extend 1.6 billion yen worth of aid to Myanmar to help the country make up for its serious shortage of electric power, government sources said.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda was to announce the decision in his talks with Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) Secretary-General U Htay Oo at the prime minister's office in Tokyo on the evening of June 14.

Japan will use the money to provide 16 diesel power generators, each with an output of 1,000 kilowatts, as well as diesel fuel, to Myanmar. The power generators will be installed at power substations neighboring hospitals, water purification plants and tap water supply facilities in Yangon, the country's biggest city.

Currently, Myanmar relies on hydraulic power stations for 70 to 80 percent of electric power consumed domestically.

However, the country has been seriously short of power recently because of a water shortage since May, a surge in the demand for electricity as a result of increasing business activities and damage to power transmission facilities.

The Myanmar government has begun rolling power blackouts for households and factories, prompting about 1,000 citizens to stage a demonstration against the move in Mandalay, the second largest city in the country.

The Myanmar government has asked other countries for emergency assistance, fearing that "the frequent occurrence of

demonstrations could seriously affect the country's democratization drive and economic reform."

Tokyo's 1.6 billion yen emergency grant will be the first such aid in the world to Myanmar to help it with its power shortage, according to the Foreign Ministry.

The government also plans to provide a gas turbine power generator to a thermal power station on the outskirts of Yangon as part of additional assistance it will extend to Myanmar by the end of this year.

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