

Bangladesh, Japan seal aid deal, agree to nuclear power talks

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Visiting Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed a joint statement with counterpart Shinzo Abe on Monday in Tokyo to seal Japan's pledge to extend up to ¥600 billion in economic assistance to the country over the next four to five years.

The funds, mainly in the form of loans, will be used to build infrastructure and other projects in Bangladesh.

The two countries also agreed to launch a meeting of experts to discuss the lessons Japan has learned so far from the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Abe told reporters after the meeting.

Bangladesh, which suffers from chronic power shortages, is building its first nuclear power plant, in conjunction with Russia, about 120 km north of Dacca, the capital.

"Prime Minister Hasina . . . expressed her hope that Japan would examine the possibility to cooperate with Bangladesh for a nuclear power plant project in the future," their joint statement said.

"We have visited almost all issues of bilateral relations, including economic cooperation," Hasina said after meeting with Abe at the prime minister's office.

"It was very constructive discussion and . . . the joint statement will provide a guide for the implementation of issues we both decided to carry out," she said, adding she has asked Abe to soon visit Bangladesh.

According to the statement, Hasina also expressed "her support and appreciation for Japan's policy of 'proactive pacifism,'" Abe's pet phrase for his push to get the Japanese military more involved in international security operations.

The statement also said the two leaders "underscored the importance of the freedom of navigation and shared the view that international disputes and issues should be resolved peacefully" based on international law.

The Japanese side has inserted similar sentences in many recent joint statements with other foreign leaders, an apparent drive by Abe to keep China in check as Beijing tries to extend its military clout in the East and South China seas.

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