

PM Abe promises 20 bil. yen in aid to LNG-supplier Papua New Guinea

PORT MORESBY (Kyodo) -- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Thursday pledged 20 billion yen in aid over three years to Papua New Guinea, for the supplier of liquefied natural gas and other raw materials to use building infrastructure.

Abe announced the official development assistance at a joint press conference in Port Moresby with his Papua New Guinean counterpart Peter O'Neill.

Japan, the world's third-largest economy, is working hard to secure stable supplies of LNG for thermal power generation, as the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster has forced the country to rely on nonnuclear energy sources.

Currently all 48 of Japan's commercial nuclear power reactors are shutdown. Prior to the Fukushima disaster, nuclear plants provided about a third of Japan's electric power.

Abe, in Papua New Guinea on the last leg of a week-long three-nation trip to New Zealand and Australia as well, discussed a wide range of matters with O'Neill, according to a joint statement issued after the summit talks.

To boost bilateral trade and investment, Japan and Papua New Guinea will work together toward signing an accord to prevent double taxation and tax evasion, the statement said.

The two countries also confirmed they will aim to reform the United Nations, so more countries are represented as permanent and nonpermanent Security Council members.

On national security, the two leaders agreed that they oppose any attempts to change the status quo by force, in apparent reference to an assertive China.

O'Neill also expressed his support for Japan's move to make more "proactive" contributions to peace in the Asia-Pacific region, the statement said.

Abe's visit came a week after his Cabinet approved a reinterpretation of Japan's pacifist Constitution to enable the nation's Self-Defense Forces to defend allies under armed attack in collective self-defense.

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