

Koizumi wants closer nuclear energy cooperation with Kazakhstan

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Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Monday that Japan hoped to expand its cooperation with Kazakhstan in the field of nuclear energy.

After meeting with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Astana, Koizumi said he believed that their two nations stood to both benefit significantly from working on bilateral nuclear energy ventures.

The two countries signed a cooperative memorandum on jointly developing atomic energy in this uranium-rich Central Asian nation.

Koizumi, who is expected to step down in September, arrived in Astana on Monday, commencing his four-day trip to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This was the first visit by a Japanese premier to the region since the two ex-Soviet republics gained their independence in 1991.

Koizumi also said he hoped to strengthen ties with Kazakhstan in other areas, including economy, politics and personnel exchanges.

Nazarbayev echoed Koizumi's hopes, including for more Japanese investment in the high-tech sector, and he indicated that his country was prepared to provide preferential conditions for such investment.