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U.S. energy official voices concern over zero nuclear energy target

Jiji

WASHINGTON — U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman has voiced concerns about Japan's apparent plans to end its nuclear energy dependence by the 2030s, Democratic Party of Japan executive Seiji Maehara said Wednesday.

At a meeting with the DPJ's policy chief Tuesday, Poneman said that if Japan takes such steps it might have unexpected effects on the United States and other concerned parties, Maehara said.

In a revamp of its energy and environmental strategy, the government is expected to state that it will aim to eliminate all reliance on nuclear energy.

At his meeting with Poneman, Maehara explained that Japan will set a target but stop short of fully committing to it. This is because sellers of oil and natural gas would demand unreasonable prices should Japan declare its commitment to zero reliance, Maehara told Poneman.

Poneman replied that Japan must make its own decision on energy issues but requested measures to minimize any negative effects that may arise if Japan sets a zero nuclear target, according to Maehara. Japan should stay flexible about implementing the strategy, Poneman added, noting the importance of holding further discussions. If the world's third-biggest economy snaps up fossil fuels, energy prices will change significantly, Poneman was quoted as saying.

Washington hopes to help Japan diversify its energy sources, but Japan also needs to take into account the possibility that such diversification will not progress steadily, he told Maehara. Japan should examine economic efficiency and safety, Poneman said, advising Japan to exercise caution if it carries out any drastic changes to its energy policy.

Authority head worried

Kyodo

FUKUSHIMA — Radiation physicist Shunichi Tanaka said Thursday his slated appointment without parliamentary approval as head of the new nuclear regulatory body may compromise its political independence.

"Ironically, I feel that (the new body's) political independence is still insufficient," Tanaka told reporters in the city of Fukushima.

Fearing that Tanaka's nomination could be turned down at a Diet session that ended last week, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda refrained from seeking the Diet's approval, choosing instead to use his authority to appoint Tanaka as head of the Nuclear Regulation Authority as of next week.

The new body has been designed as a more independent, stronger regulatory body than the existing Nuclear and Industry Safety Agency, following the March 2011 accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.

Tanaka said he would like to promptly toughen Japan's nuclear regulations, which have trailed international standards.

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A piece of your mind Pocket money?

The "allowance" that wives in Japan give their husbands for food and entertainment has fallen to under 40,000 a month, its lowest point since 1982. What's your take?

- That seems like a reasonable amount of money.
- That is way too little for enjoyable meals and entertainment.
- At least drinking at home will increase family time.
- Salarymen are lucky to have their wives manage their finances.
- I feel sorry for men whose money is controlled by their wives.

Total Votes : 2930

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At an earlier meeting with Fukushima Vice Gov. Masao Uchibori, Tanaka said he will resign as the prefecture's radioactive decontamination adviser and concentrate his energy into his new work at the regulatory body.

Tanaka, who hails from the city of Fukushima, has frequently visited the prefecture for radioactive decontamination operations since the nuclear disaster began.

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