

News

Zero option for nuclear power may be added to revamped energy plan

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Eliminating dependence on **nuclear power** is expected to be part of the government's revamped energy policy, officials say.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda will reveal the new policy to his ministers after making a formal decision this month, government officials said Saturday.

According to the officials, the government will make the 15 percent option its interim target for nuclear power dependence in 2030 before completely eliminating it from electricity generation at an unspecified date.

Shooting for 15 percent dependence by 2030 was expected to be the goal of the new energy policy, but given the feedback compiled from weeks of public hearings and a deliberative opinion poll, the government now thinks it necessary to clarify that Japan will become nuclear-free because the majority of the public favors the zero-percent option.

The zero option will be part of the innovative energy and environmental strategies to be adopted at the ministerial meeting, the officials said.

The new energy policy will require the government to conduct progress reports on efforts to reduce nuclear dependence every five years starting in 2015.

The upcoming policy paper will also state the numerous difficulties Japan is expected to experience in pursuing the goal, such as how to expand the use of renewable energy and permanently dispose of spent nuclear fuel, they said.

Noda plans to call on all citizens to cooperate in achieving the target, they added.

As for decommissioning the nation's reactors, the paper will state that the government is to "strictly apply" the basic 40-year age rule for shutdowns.

Other options under consideration include termination of the commercialization program for "fast-breeder" reactors and of research on the experimental Monju prototype in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture.

As for the all-important nuclear fuel cycle, the government is actually discussing scaling down its reprocessing and recycling pursuits.