

## **Kingdom, Japan nearing nuclear deal**

**AMMAN** - Jordan and Japan are set to sign a nuclear cooperation agreement (NCA) “very soon”, a senior government official said.

According to Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Jafar Hassan, the two sides are in close negotiations and expect to sign an NCA “within weeks”.

“We hope to sign an agreement with Japan in less than two months,” Hassan told The Jordan Times late Wednesday, highlighting the broad international support enjoyed by the Kingdom’s peaceful nuclear energy programme.

The deal paves the way for Japanese companies to sell nuclear technology to the Kingdom and encourages closer exchange of expertise in the field.

Japan currently generates one-third of its electricity from nuclear power, with 55 reactors producing over 49,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity.

Japanese firm Mitsubishi Heavy Industries is part of a joint consortium with AREVA ATMEA1 technology in the running to construct the Kingdom’s first nuclear power plant. The NCA is a prerequisite for their bid to move forward.

Japan and France have maintained that the consortium’s pressurised water reactor technology fits the Kingdom’s needs as it is less water intensive than other Generation III reactor models.

However, the 1,000-1,150MW model reactor, which incorporates technology from AREVA’s Evolutionary Power Reactor and Mitsubishi’s Advanced Pressurised Water Reactor, has yet to be built or brought online anywhere in the world.

ATMEA1 was among three technologies short-listed by the commission in May, along with Canadian AECL’s Enhanced CANDU 6 reactor, and the AES-92 VVER-1000 reactor by Russian firm AtomStroyExport.

Also in Wednesday’s interview, Hassan underlined that negotiations for an NCA with the US are “going in a very positive direction”, stressing that the Jordan will not forego its rights enshrined in international conventions in any cooperation deal.

“The US has been supportive and very understanding of our need to produce nuclear energy, and we hope to reach an agreement as soon as possible,” he said, adding that “frank and ongoing discussions” are currently focusing on technical aspects of the deal.

The Kingdom currently has nuclear cooperation agreements with eight countries including France, Spain, China, South Korea, Canada, Russia, the UK and Argentina.

The national nuclear programme calls for the establishment of a 1,000MW Generation III reactor on a site near Aqaba by the end of the decade, with plans in place for three additional plants to transform Jordan from an energy importer to an exporter.