

# Japanese businessman launches Japan Renewable Energy Foundation with mammoth goals

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Masayoshi Son

(PhysOrg.com) -- Masayoshi Son, founder and CEO of Softbank, one of Japan's largest Internet conglomerates, announced this week the establishment of the Japan Renewable Energy Foundation (JREF) with the goal of moving Japan away from its dependence on nuclear energy towards more eco friendly and safer renewable sources. Son, reportedly the richest man in his country, said in an [interview with Asahi Shimbun](#), that despite suspicions by other business people regarding his motives, his ambition regarding JREF is to safeguard the Asian nation's energy

supply in light of the problems encountered by the country in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster following the tsunami last March.

At the launch meeting Son noted that [Japan](#) is prone to earthquakes and even tsunami's which very clearly means that relying on [nuclear power](#) in the future is too risky. Even now, six months after the tsunami that flattened large parts of the coast near Tokyo and knocked out the Fukushima plant, the country is still experiencing shortages and some energy rationing. His plan is for the country to embark on a massive buildup of renewable systems comprised, at least initially, of solar, geothermal and wind collection.

To kick-start this effort, Son has invested 1 billion yen of his own money (from a fortune estimated to be around 8 billion) and says that his company will invest between 10 and 20 billion yen over the next several years. He adds that the goal of JREF will be to move Japan from its current heavy reliance on nuclear power to an infrastructure that meets 60% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2030. To meet that goal, he says, investments of some 2 trillion yen per year will be needed. He is calling on both the government and other businesses to join him in his ambitious venture.

In the interview, Son says that nuclear power also poses the still unsolved problem of what to do with all the waste. In light of that, and the fact that over the next half-century oil and coal prices are likely to skyrocket, investing in renewable proven energy producers such as wind, geothermal and coal makes the most sense. To that end, he has hired Tomas Kl'berger, former director-general of the Swedish [Energy](#) Agency to run the JREF. Sweden he points out, is a country that has invested so heavily in renewable resources, that they now account for 30% of the countries needs, and has closed its nuclear plants to boot.

And finally, to address the concerns of those who feel Japan has too little land to devote to solar or wind collection, Son points out that 90% of the land used by industrial parks goes unused as does some 400,000 hectares of farmland that is no longer cultivated due to overstressed soil.

Son concludes by noting that past wars have been fought over scarce resources and those who fail to learn its lessons are likely to repeat the mistakes of the past. He hopes that others in his country will join him and that together they can all secure the future of their country.

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