

Japan, Kazakhstan to jointly develop rare earths: report

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Japan will jointly develop rare earths with Kazakhstan as part of its efforts to secure supplies of the key minerals now controlled by China, a newspaper said Sunday.

Japan plans to reach an accord when trade and industry minister Yukio Edano visits the central Asian country in early May and meets Kazakh government officials, including President Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Asahi Shimbun reported.

Under the plan, Japan and Kazakhstan will jointly build a plant in northern Kazakhstan to produce dysprosium, a rare earth used to make motors of electric and [hybrid vehicles](#) as well as other electronic products, Asahi said.

The Japanese companies to be involved in the project include Sumitomo Corp., Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation and Shin-Etsu Chemical Co. Ltd., the newspaper said.

Japan plans to import 30 tonnes of dysprosium from [Kazakhstan](#) this year, the daily said, adding that it plans to raise the shipment next year to more than 50 tonnes accounting for 10 percent of Japan's annual demand for the mineral.

[Japan](#), the European Union and the United States claim China -- which produces more than 90 percent of the world's supply of [rare earths](#) -- is unfairly benefiting its own industries by restricting exports.

Beijing has argued that its controls, which include export duties and quotas, are necessary to help conserve the highly sought-after natural resources, limit environmental damage from excessive mining and to meet domestic demand.

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