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India-Japan cooperation on N-energy mooted

Mumbai, Dec. 13 (PTI): A top Japanese scientist yesterday observed that New Delhi and Tokyo can discuss and cooperate on peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Both Japan and India have strong will for peaceful uses of atomic energy and "we can discuss and cooperate (on the issue) together for a peaceful future," Youichi Fujiie, former Chairman of Japan's Atomic Energy Commission, told PTI here.

On the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal, he said "it is a bilateral issue and I should avoid giving my comments. We all hope for peaceful use of nuclear energy."

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is embarking tomorrow on a four-day trip to Japan where bilateral cooperation in civil nuclear energy will be high on his agenda.

Fujiie said the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) needs to be modified as in the current form it has several problems.

"NPT itself is changing due to its inherent problems and we have to find out ways to overcome them," said Fujiie who was here to take part in a five-day conference on 'Advances in Nuclear Materials' which began at BARC here.

"Japan is hopeful these problems will get solved and we can have a bright future for peaceful uses of atomic energy", he said.

The scientist, however, did not elaborate on the problems being faced by NPT, extended indefinitely in 1995-96. The NPT, not signed by India, allows only five countries US, UK, France, Russia and China to keep their nuclear weapons.

"We are scientists and we develop technologies satisfying five factors -- energy production, fuel production, system safety, conversion of long-lived radio-isotopes into short-lived ones or non-radioactive materials and proliferation resistance," Fujiie noted. "Other issues have to be intelligently solved by the politicians."

