SEOUL -- South Korea has not considered asking Japan to reprocess its spent nuclear fuel, a senior official said Monday, denying a Japanese media report that Tokyo has proposed handling Seoul's atomic waste.

Responding to the Tokyo Shimbun report a day earlier that Japan has made a proposal that its atomic recycling plant could reprocess spent nuclear fuel rods from South Korea, the foreign ministry official said, "The government has not even considered such a plan."

Japan plans to bring its long-delayed Rokkasho reprocessing plant on line this year, but the fate of the atomic recycling plant remains uncertain if Tokyo confirms its plan to phase out nuclear power over the next three decades in the wake of the Fukushima meltdowns.

South Korea is calling for the U.S. to approve it undertaking "peaceful" enrichment of uranium and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel, although little progress has been made in bilateral negotiations to revise the countries' nuclear accord.

Under a 1974 accord with the U.S., South Korea is banned from enriching uranium or reprocessing spent nuclear fuel. The allies have held five rounds of formal negotiations since 2010 to rewrite the bilateral nuclear cooperation treaty, which expires in 2014.

South Korea, a major nuclear energy developer, wants the U.S. to allow it to adopt a proliferation-resistant technology for enriching uranium and reprocessing spent atomic fuel from its 22 nuclear power plants, but Washington has been reluctant to do so.
S. Korea not considering asking Japan to reprocess its spent nuclear fuel