

Turkey will have a free trade deal with Japan before EU: Economy minister



Freshly-appointed Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekçi (L) attends the Turkish envoys' conference in Ankara along with Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu. AA photo

Turkey hopes to finalize free trade talks with Japan before the European Union does, Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekçi has said, just days after returning from a commerce ties-enhancing East Asia visit with the prime minister.

“The EU has launched talks with Japan on a free trade agreement (FTA), which we expect to last at least four years in the slow-paced structure of the 28-member union. We will start official talks with Japan as of June 1 and hopefully finalize the talks before the EU does and sign the Japan-Turkey FTA,” the minister said Jan. 14 in his address to Turkish ambassadors who convened in Ankara for an annual conference.

Zeybekçi returned from a week-long visit to Japan, Malaysia and Singapore on Jan. 8 accompanying Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

Erdoğan and his counterparts in all three countries have reached agreements to boost efforts to reach free trade talks.

“Turkey will swiftly sign free trade agreements (FTA) with Japan, Singapore and Malaysia upon Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan’s directives,” also said the minister.

Zeybekçi said technical talks with Malaysia for an FTA had been completed and the agreement would be signed in mid-April by the prime ministers of the two countries.

“We believe the new areas in the Asia-Pacific region to be opened by the FTAs will

potentially increase our foreign trade volume to at least \$7-8 billion, a figure 10 tenfold the current one,” said Zeybekçi.

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