Greying Japan plans robo-nurses in five years: govt

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Japan's electronics giant Toshiba introduces the prototype housekeeping robot "ApriAttenda" in Kasawaki, Kanagawa prefecture, suburban Tokyo on March 11. Japan plans to prepare safety rules soon for robot nurses, which are expected to serve humans within five years in the fast-greying society, a government official has said.

Japan plans to prepare safety rules soon for robot nurses, which are expected to serve humans within five years in the fast-greying society, a government official said Wednesday.

"We hope that the Japanese robotics industry will continue to be the

industry leader by preparing necessary guidelines for service robots," said ministry of trade and industry official Motoki Korenaga.

Japan, with a high life expectancy and low birth rate, faces a shortage of caregivers for elderly people and has loosened its tight immigration rules to invite hundreds of nurses from the Philippines and Indonesia.

"As aging of the population is a common problem for developed countries, Japan wants to become an advanced country in the area of addressing the aging society with the use of robots," the official told AFP.

A new body called the Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization will launch a five-year project in April to improve safety standards for next-generation robots, the ministry said.

About 70 percent of the world's industrial robots are made by Japanese companies. The trade ministry expects Japan's robotics market to grow to 6.2 trillion yen (63.5 billion dollars) in 2025 from 70 million yen last year.

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