

Pakistan, China to Sign Nuclear Power Plant Deal

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ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (Reuters) - Pakistan and China will sign a deal Tuesday for the construction of a nuclear power plant, the second such plant to be built with the help of Beijing, officials said Monday.

Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali will sign the deal for the 300 megawatt nuclear power plant, said a Pakistani government official who asked not to be identified.

Monday, three Chinese technicians were killed and nine wounded in Gawadar, a port on the south coast where China is providing the bulk of financing for a major expansion project.

Officials have blamed the powerful car bomb on "terrorists."

The nuclear agreement was expected to have been signed in November during a visit by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to China, but was delayed.

The plant will be constructed at Chashma, on the banks of the Indus River, around 170 miles south of Islamabad, next to the first plant that China helped to build.

Energy experts have said the project would be worth about \$600 million and take at least six years to complete.

The first Chashma nuclear power plant was built in 1999 and connected to the national power grid in early 2000.

The United States has repeatedly urged China to halt nuclear cooperation with Pakistan, but both Beijing and Islamabad deny they working together for military purposes.

The Pakistani official said the power plant would be under the safeguard of the International Atomic Energy Agency and was part of cooperation between Pakistan and China on peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Pakistan's top nuclear scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan, publicly confessed in February to selling nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

Pakistan built its first nuclear power station in 1972 in Karachi with Canadian help. The Karachi plant has a capacity of 137 megawatts.

Western countries, under pressure from the United States, later halted nuclear cooperation with Pakistan amid suspicions Islamabad was developing nuclear weapons clandestinely.

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