
Iran says its first NPP will be commissioned before March 2009

RIA Novosti - 22/12/2007

TEHRAN, December 22 () - Iran's first nuclear power plant being built by Russia will start generating electricity before March 2009, the Islamic Republic's government spokesman said on Saturday.

"In line with a timetable of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, electricity to be generated by the Bushehr nuclear power plant will flow into the country's power grid next year," Gholam Hossein Elham said. A new year in Iran begins on March 21 and finishes on March 20.

"We hope the positive process connected with the Bushehr NPP will continue," Elham said.

Russia has recently announced the start of nuclear fuel deliveries to the Bushehr plant following months of delays to the plant's construction.

Under a Russian-Iranian agreement on Bushehr, nuclear fuel deliveries to the plant start about six months ahead of its commissioning. Russian officials said supplies would continue into February 2008.

The Russian contractor for the \$1 billion project, state-controlled Atomstroyexport, said on Thursday the plant will not be commissioned before the end of 2008.

The United States and other Western powers suspect Iran of secret plans to build nuclear weapons and have pushed for measures to force Tehran to halt uranium enrichment, which is used in both electricity generation and weapons production.

The Western nations and Israel have criticized Russia's cooperation with Iran, saying nuclear fuel supplies and the construction of an atomic power plant will aid the Islamic Republic in its attempts to develop nuclear weapons.

Russia's Foreign Ministry said the start of nuclear fuel supplies to Iran means the country has provided additional written guarantees that the fuel will be used solely for electricity generation.
