
Areva declares interest in Turkey nuclear plant project

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ISTANBUL (Thomson Financial) - French nuclear giant Areva said it is interested in a planned tender for the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant.

'We are going to meet the (Turkish) energy minister (Hilmi Guler) and we will clearly indicate to him that the Areva (other-otc: ARVCF.PK -news - people) company is interested,' Gabriel Saltarelli, head of the company's commercial affairs in Central and Eastern Europe, told reporters.

'We are going to give it all we have got and hang on to demonstrate that it is possible to work in Turkey despite difficult political conditions,' said Saltarelli.

He and other leading French business figures were in Turkey accompanying France's junior Trade Minister Herve Norelli on a three-day visit.

French-Turkish ties took a serious blow in 2001 when the French parliament recognized as genocide the World War 1 mass killings of Armenians in Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire.

France's hostility towards extending Turkey full membership of the European Union has further soured bilateral ties.

Novelli said that Turkey's nuclear ambition was one of the topics he will discuss with energy minister Guler when the two meet in Ankara on Tuesday.

'What interests me now is that the ambitious Turkish nuclear programme will provide an opportunity for French companies, and I think here of Areva, to attract the attention of Turkish friends,' he said.

The Turkish government is expected to announce on February 21 the tender for the country's first nuclear power plant that will be constructed at a controversial location near the Mediterranean coast, opposed by environmentalists for its proximity to a faultline.

But Saltarelli and Novelli both said that they were informed the tender had been postponed to a later date for unknown reasons.

The Turkish energy ministry was not immediately available for comment.

Turkey plans to build three nuclear plants with a total capacity of about 5,000 megawatts in hopes of preventing a possible energy shortage and reducing dependence on foreign supplies.
