

Jordan, Turkey cement nuclear ties



Minister of Energy Khaled Toukan and Turkish Atomic Energy Agency President Zafer Alper complete a nuclear cooperation agreement on Thursday (Petra photo)

AMMAN - Jordan and Turkey on Thursday brought decades of cooperation into a new era by signing a nuclear cooperation agreement (NCA).

The agreement, signed by Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Khaled Toukan and Turkish Atomic Energy Agency (TAEK) President Zafer Alper, aims to boost exchange of expertise among the emerging nuclear states and bolster regional energy cooperation.

In a signing ceremony on Thursday, Toukan expressed hope that Jordan will benefit from Turkey's experience at its Sarakoy Nuclear Research and Training Centre, underlining that a Korean consortium is currently preparing for a nuclear research reactor at the Jordan University of Science and Technology.

During the signing ceremony, which was also attended by Turkish Ambassador to Jordan Ali Koprulu, Alper underlined Turkey's unique financing approach in establishing its programme.

In May 2010, TAEK signed with Russian Atomstroyexport for four 1,200 megawatt VVER reactors, the first of which is to be brought online within the next seven years.

The Russian firm is one of the three technology suppliers shortlisted by JAEC to construct the Kingdom's first nuclear reactor, along with Japanese-French consortium AREVA and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Canadian firm AECL.

According to Toukan: "The preferred technology provider is to be announced by the commission in August 2011."

Thursday's agreement raised to 12 the number of countries which have extended their official support for the country's nuclear programme, which calls for the construction of a 1,000 megawatt Generation III reactor in the central region by the end of the decade.

Jordan has previously signed NCAs with France, China, South Korea, Canada, Russia, the UK, Spain, Argentina, Japan, Romania and Italy.

JAEC is currently in ongoing discussions with Romania and Czechoslovakia to broaden its scope of international cooperation.

Of the major nuclear powers, only the US has yet to sign an NCA with the Kingdom.

The Kingdom's peaceful nuclear power programme has been prioritised as key to weaning the country off energy imports, which cost the Kingdom around 20 per cent of its gross domestic product.