

Jordan reaches out to potential nuclear plant partners

AMMAN - The Kingdom is set to invite four international energy firms to take part in the country's peaceful nuclear programme as strategic partners.

The Jordan Atomic Energy Commission (JAEC) is expected to request bids this week from French energy giant GDF Suez, China's Datang International Power Generation Co., Russia's Rosatom Corp. and Japan's Kansai Electric Power Co. to invest in and operate the country's first nuclear power plant, according to Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Khaled Toukan.

The JAEC has prioritised bringing on a strategic operator and investor to help defray the capital costs of constructing the reactor, to be built by 2019, and establish a joint utility to sell electricity to the National Electric Power Company.

GDF Suez has served as an operator in several countries, with its engineering subsidiary Tractebel currently carrying out feasibility studies on potential reactor sites in the country.

Datang boasts a portfolio of 50 power generation companies and has recently embarked on the establishment of two 1,000 megawatt (MW) nuclear reactors in China.

State-owned Rosatom is part of a Russian consortium aiding Turkey's bid to establish four reactors and currently oversees 32 nuclear power units producing 24,000MW within Russia.

Kansai Electric Power Co. manages multiple reactors in Japan, with nearly half of its electricity generated from nuclear power.

While the ownership stake of the strategic operator has yet to be disclosed, it is believed that up to a 50-50 share is being considered, with the government retaining ownership of the plant.

The current leading site for the country's first reactor is in Majdal in Mafraq Governorate, some 40 kilometres northwest of Amman.

Pending ongoing feasibility studies on water availability from the nearby Khirbet Al Samra Wastewater Treatment Plant, the site is projected to accommodate up to four reactors.

The Kingdom currently imports 96 per cent of its energy needs at a cost of one-fifth of the gross domestic product.