

Iran Asks Russia About Building More Nuclear Reactors

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NEW YORK — Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Friday that Tehran is talking to Russia about building additional nuclear power reactors.

He also invited other countries and companies to bid to build new nuclear power plants.

The \$1 billion Bushehr reactor was built by the Russian firm Atomstroieexport and commissioned in a ceremony on Sept. 13.

Ahmadinejad said Iran needs an additional 19,000 megawatts of energy beyond the 1,000 now coming from Bushehr.

"There are currently conversations ongoing with the Russians to provide that," Ahmadinejad told a news conference at a New York hotel, a day after he addressed the United Nations General Assembly.

"But it is only a general proposal," he said. "And from here today I want to officially invite

other firms and other entities to come and bid and propose their participation for building these power plants."

Ahmadinejad said Iran's relations with Russia were as a neighbor, "and neighbors must be friends with one another."

"There are efforts on both sides in order to have a mutually beneficial ongoing relationship," he said.

Bushehr increased operations this month after more than a decade of delays, pumping out electricity at up to 40 percent capacity. Iranian officials say the plant could begin full-power operations in December.

The launch of the plant has been delayed for more than a decade over technical and construction setbacks — and possibly by Russian efforts to use it as leverage in negotiations with Iran over its secretive nuclear program.

Russia has promised to have full oversight of the nuclear fuel used in the Bushehr plant.

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