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Russia, Saudi Arabia Sign Nuclear Energy Cooperation Deal

By The Moscow Times

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Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) attends a meeting with Saudi Defence Minister Prince Mohammad Bin Salman at the Konstantin (Konstantinovsky) Palace in St. Petersburg.

KHOBAR, Saudi Arabia — Saudi Arabia and Russia have signed an agreement to cooperate on nuclear energy development, a Saudi government body in charge of such projects said.

The government body, the King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy, announced the cooperation deal on its website on Thursday but gave no further details.

Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television, citing unnamed sources, said the kingdom planned to build 16 nuclear reactors that Russia would play a significant role in operating.

The Saudi atomic and renewable energy body has already signed nuclear cooperation deals with countries able to build reactors, including the United States, France, Russia, South Korea, China and Argentina.

It is not clear if this new deal, announced on Thursday, will take cooperation with Russia to a more advanced level.

Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi was due to meet his counterpart Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak in St. Petersburg on Thursday to discuss a broad cooperation agreement.

In 2012, Saudi Arabia said it aimed to build 17 gigawatts (GW) of nuclear power by 2032 as well as around 41 GW of solar capacity. The oil exporter currently has no nuclear power plants.

Nuclear and solar power stations would reduce the diversion of Saudi Arabia's oil output for use in domestic power generation, leaving more available for export.

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