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Rosatom to Build Kazakhstan's First Nuclear Power Plant

By AFP

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The village of Ulken near Balkhash Lake. **Ruslan Pryanikov / AFP**

Russia's state nuclear corporation Rosatom will lead the construction of the first atomic power plant in Kazakhstan, the world's top uranium producer, authorities in the Central Asian country said on Saturday.

"Rosatom has been named as the leader of the international consortium for the construction of the first nuclear power plant in Kazakhstan," Kazakhstan's nuclear power agency said in a statement.

Kazakhstan, a vast resource-rich country in Central Asia, is currently the world's top uranium producer, providing 43% of global supplies. However, does not currently produce enough electricity to meet domestic consumption needs.

The new power plant, whose construction was approved in a referendum in late 2024, will be

built near the partially abandoned village of Ulken near Balkhash Lake. The lake, located in the southeast, is the country's second largest.

China's National Nuclear Corporation, France's EDF and South Korea's Hydro and Nuclear Power had all bid to build the plant.

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In their announcement on Saturday, Kazakh authorities said that the three companies would be included in the consortium led by Rosatom but did not provide any details.

Observers say the idea of the consortium is a way for authorities to maintain good relations with all the countries involved, but it is unlikely to come to fruition, and Rosatom will end up building the plant by itself.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has sought to maintain good relations with Russia and China.

Rosatom has proposed financing the project, and work will now begin to thresh out the details, the statement said.

The announcement comes a few days before Chinese leader Xi Jinping is due to visit Kazakhstan for a "China-Central Asia" summit.

Kazakhstan had nuclear power plants when it was part of the Soviet Union, in addition to hosting Soviet nuclear weapons. It was also the site for Soviet nuclear testing.

After the break-up of the USSR in 1991, the new country gave up its nuclear weapons, along with other ex-Soviet states, including Belarus and Ukraine.

Kazakhstan decommissioned its nuclear power plants in the following years.

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