

Government announces nuclear procurement plans

By [Wendell Roelf](#)

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South Africa will launch a bidding process for an extra 2,500MW of nuclear power by March, as the country attempts to tackle its worst power cuts on record. Businesses and households have been left without power for up to 10 hours on some days this year, hitting South Africa's economic output and prompting plans to boost generation.



An aerial view of South Africa's Koeberg Nuclear Power Station, in Cape Town. Source: Reuters/Esa Alexander

However, officials said on Tuesday that the new nuclear power procurement is not a short-term fix, as the first units are only expected to start operating in a decade.

"We are excited about the prospects and we are confident about our ability to ensure that within a reasonable period of time we are able (to announce) preferred bidders," Minister in the Presidency responsible for Electricity Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa told a news conference.

Ramokgopa reiterated that South Africa, which has the African continent's only operational nuclear power plant, Koeberg, close to Cape Town, will build new ones at a scale and pace it can afford.



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South Africans are wary of the government's nuclear programme after a 9,600MW nuclear deal with Russia, initiated during Jacob Zuma's scandal-plagued presidency, was thwarted by a court challenge in 2017.

Meanwhile, financing and long-term storage options for radioactive waste remain concerns, environmentalists say.

Koeberg future hangs in the balance

"Nuclear should not be on the agenda. It is a myth that it is a climate change solution, a myth that it is the cheapest form of electricity ... there is no way civil society can accept this," said Liziwe McDaid, a local environmental campaigner.

Koeberg, with a capacity of around 1,900MW, provides around 5% of the country's energy needs out of a nominal installed capacity of about 46,000MW.

Government is awaiting regulatory approval after applying for a 20-year extension to Koeberg's operating licence which expires in July 2024.

South Africa expects to commission the first unit of the new 2,500MW nuclear project by 2032/33, said Zizamele Mbambo, a senior energy ministry official.

"We must issue an open and transparent tender that makes sure there is cost competitiveness," Mbambo added.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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