

Putin, Bush to seek nuclear cooperation at G8 meet

This G8 meeting could be productive in the nuclear field.

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Russia and the US will seek to deepen nuclear cooperation at technical and security-oriented levels at the upcoming G8 summit in St Petersburg, Russia's nuclear power chief said Wednesday.

Technical work in the peaceful use of nuclear energy would be expanded, chief of Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency Rosatom Sergei Kiriyeenko said during a visit to the Urals city of Chelyabinsk.

He rejected US media reports that Russia would start large-scale importation and storage of nuclear waste from Washington.

One aspect of a planned agreement was joint measures against smuggling of radioactive material and nuclear terrorism, the German weekly Die Zeit reported in its Internet edition.

If the presidents approve the nuclear initiatives at bilateral talks in St. Petersburg on Friday and Saturday the relevant documents would be drafted over the next 18 months, Kiriyeenko said.

Russia plays a crucial role in US' efforts to avert nuclear terrorism.

However, experts have warned that spent radioactive fuel stored in Russia is "the most likely source of future terrorist acts," the newspaper wrote.

However, this danger also undermined Russia's attempts to prove itself a reliable partner against terrorism, it added.

In civil power generation, the US wanted to learn from Russia's experience in building fast breeder reactors, which created fuel while operating, said Rosatom nuclear technician Igor Konyshchev.

Russia in turn is interested in US techniques for producing mixed oxide fuel, a means to reuse plutonium in spent reactor fuel to provide energy through electricity generation.

US newspapers reported earlier that Bush and Putin wanted to sign an agreement on the import of spent nuclear fuel to Russia.

This would potentially create a business worth billions of dollars and encourage Russia to take a tougher line on Iran.

Kiriyeenko said Russia was more interested in closer technical cooperation. But because of the cheap production terms it could offer, it also had a strong interest in US proposals to make nuclear fuel rods only in international centres controlled by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).