

Iran's Russian-built atomic plant to start up Sept 2007

Good news

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The atomic reactor Russia is building for Iran at Bushehr is scheduled to start up in September next year, Sergei Kiriyyenko, head of Russia's atomic energy agency, said on Friday.

"A realistic deadline (for transmitting power to the grid) is November 2007. This means a physical start-up (of the reactor) in September and the dispatch of fuel ... six months earlier," he told Reuters in an interview. "That means March or April."

Russia has consistently postponed the opening date for the plant, citing technical difficulties caused by the need to build it on the foundations of a differently designed station started before the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Washington has long pushed for Russia to stop building the atomic plant for Iran, which it accuses of seeking nuclear arms. It believes Iran could use Russian atomic know-how to make nuclear weapons, and wants sanctions imposed to force Iran to abandon its nuclear research.

Kiriyyenko said the construction at Bushehr was being carried out under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and should not be seen as a threat to world peace.

"I am not involved in discussing the issue of sanctions against Iran, but from my understanding there are no objective grounds for the building of Bushehr to fall under sanctions," he said. "As long as the plant does not violate non-proliferation requirements ... there will no obstacles."