

UAE nuclear power plant gets construction approval

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Dubai: The UAE's nuclear regulator has granted licence for the construction of the oil-rich country's first nuclear energy plant.

The license for the construction of units I and II of the Barakah Nuclear Facility, and related regulated activities, was approved by the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation (FANR) Board of Management chaired by Dr Ahmed Al Mazrouei, at its meeting yesterday, FANR said in a statement.

The approval is the result of a thorough review by FANR of Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation's (ENEC) December 2010 application for a construction licence.

The license authorises ENEC to construct two Korean-design advanced pressurized water reactors of the type known as the APR1400, each capable of producing 1,400 megawatts of electricity but does not allow ENEC to operate them.

ENEC must apply to FANR for a separate operating license.

"The issuance of a construction licence is a significant milestone in the UAE's nuclear energy programme," Dr Al Mazrouei said.

The new development follows licences FANR previously granted to ENEC for selecting and preparing the site.

It also builds upon an additional assessment by ENEC of lessons learned from the March 2011 accident at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station.

This assessment, which was requested and reviewed by FANR as an integral part of the application, demonstrated the robustness of ENEC's proposed plant.

It also resulted in a number of design enhancements for added safety, the statement said.

Addressing a press conference in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi today, FANR Director General Dr William D Travers said that their comprehensive review of the construction license application was carried out by more than 200 technical experts over a period of 18 months.

"The reviewers scrutinised submissions by ENEC covering all required topics including the adequacy of the proposed site, the design of the facility, the safety analysis, management systems and quality assurance for construction, radiation safety measures, physical protection and safeguards," Travers said.