

Bulgaria's government said on Wednesday it approved a report on the potential options for the revival of the Belene nuclear power plant project drafted by the energy ministry and will submit it to parliament by May 17, 2018.

The analysis of the working group at the ministry has shown that the most appropriate option for rational use of the existing equipment for the project is to resume the construction of the power plant jointly with a strategic investor, on a market basis and without state guarantees, the government said in a statement following its weekly session. By using this option Bulgaria could recover the costs incurred over the years since the start of the project and will ensure the country's energy security in a long term.

On Monday, local media quoted prime minister Boyko Borissov as saying the government will propose to parliament to lift the moratorium on the construction of a second nuclear power plant in the country in order to launch talks with potential investors. The moratorium should be removed before the 16+1 summit in Sofia of the countries in Southeast Europe and China in July, Borissov added.

In March, Bulgaria's parliament decided to task a working group within the energy ministry with exploring all options for the use of the existing equipment for the Belene project. The project has attracted the interest of French nuclear reactor company Framatome, Bulgaria's energy ministry said on Monday. On Tuesday, local media reported that Russia's state atomic energy corporation Rosatom has said it is ready to participate in any form in the project.

Last week, China National Nuclear Corporation confirmed its interest in investing in the construction of a nuclear power plant in Bulgaria.

In 2008, Bulgaria hired Atomstroyexport to build a nuclear plant in Belene, on the Danube river, reviving a project that had been mothballed for nearly two decades. After the project made scant headway, Sofia finally abandoned it with a parliament decision in February 2013. The government cancelled the project a year earlier due to disagreement over its estimated cost and failure to attract a strategic investor.

In December 2016, Bulgaria paid 601.6 million euro (\$720.5 million) in compensation to Atomstroyexport, a subsidiary of Russia's Rosatom, for the equipment manufactured by the Russian company for the Belene NPP project. Bulgaria took delivery of the equipment last year.

Bulgaria's sole Kozloduy NPP has two operating units of 1,000 megawatts each.

Source: seenews.com