

China National Nuclear Corporation has confirmed its interest in investing in the construction of a nuclear power plant in Bulgaria, the Southeast European country's energy ministry said on Thursday.

Meeting with representatives of the Chinese company, Bulgarian government officials noted that a possible implementation of the Belene NPP project would involve a competition procedure for a strategic investor, the energy ministry said in a statement.

"The government will provide no guaranties for the project, nor sign long-term power purchase agreements," deputy prime minister Tomislav Donchev was quoted as saying at the meeting.

Following a decision of the country's Parliament in March, a working group with the energy ministry is exploring the options for the use of the available equipment for the Belene project.

In 2008, Bulgaria hired Atomstroyexport to build a nuclear plant in Belene, 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, NEK paid 601.6 million euro (\$717.9 million) as compensation to Atomstroyexport, a subsidiary of Russia's Rosatom, for the equipment manufactured by the Russian company for the Belene project, which Bulgaria had abandoned.

Bulgaria has another NPP, Kozloduy, which has two operating units of 1,000 megawatts each.

Source: seenews