

The Republic of Srpska is developing the hydropower plant project together with Serbia and the joint firm has already been registered. The Republic of Srpska is waiting for the approval of BiH's competition authorities to be able to start preparatory works for the Buk Bijela hydropower plant.

Elektroprivreda Republike Srpske (ERS), state-owned electricity producer in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Elektroprivreda Srbije - EPS, its Serbian counterpart, established a joint venture this month, Prime Minister of the Republic of Srpska Radovan Višković has said. He has told RTRS the project is for the construction of the Buk Bijela hydropower plant of 93.5 MW. Preparatory works are expected to begin in September, according to the top official of one of the two entities comprising BiH.

Cascade project consists of three units

The 50-year-old plan was agreed with Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić, he noted. Buk Bijela is the largest of the three planned hydropower plants on the upper stream of the river Drina. Other news reports indicated the joint business should also run the development of hydropower plants Foča, of 44.5 MW, and Paunci, a 43.2 MW project.

Višković added the Council of Competition of BiH first needs to greenlight the endeavor and expressed optimism that the permit could be obtained within a month. Then a manager should be named and initial works can commence, he said.

Permits were obtained earlier

The construction and environmental licenses have already been issued, the prime minister stressed. The plan was sent for approval to the governments of Serbia and Srpska in several stages and the procedure is finally finished, Višković announced.

Vučić and Milorad Dodik, the Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, recently denied the new project is a step toward EPS's takeover of ERS. Serbia's president asserted the state would never do anything that's not in Srpska's interest, but he did say the region needs consolidation. Small shareholders control less than a fifth of ERS.

Environmental controversy over Buk Bijela

Earlier, activists from Green Home and Ozon from Montenegro and the Center for Environment and the Aarhus Center Sarajevo from BiH filed a complaint with the Espoo Convention Implementation Committee because BiH didn't carry out a transboundary environmental impact assessment of the planned dam for Buk Bijela.

AVIC-ENG from China signed a memorandum of understanding with the Republic of Srpska

Serbia and RS' joint hydropower plant project Buk Bijela - preparatory works to start in September

in 2017 on the construction of the hydropower plant. Last December, they also struck a deal on three hydropower plants on the nearby Bistrica river with 45 MW in total as the entity government applied for a loan with ICBC.

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