

# UAE nuclear energy programme 'very safe'

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Abu Dhabi: The UAE's civilian nuclear energy programme upholds the highest standards of safety, security, non-proliferation and operational transparency, the nation's Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation (FANR) said on Tuesday.

The FANR said it had signed a co-operation arrangement with the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in Washington DC for the exchange of technical information and co-operation in nuclear safety, security, and safeguard matters.

"This arrangement was made within the framework of the bilateral nuclear co-operation (123) agreement between the Governments of the UAE and the US, and implemented on December 17, 2009," the FANR said in a statement.

## High standards

K Al Awadi, a UAE power expert, told Gulf News: "It's a good move. US and European advice will be needed to ensure that the construction of the nuclear plants have full compliance with the highest international standards of safety and nuclear regulation".

"Government officials, non-proliferation advocates, and energy experts worldwide have called the UAE approach a gold standard for countries interested in exploring nuclear energy for the first time," the FANR said.

"The FANR-NRC Co-operation Arrangement will allow the exchange of technical information relating to the regulation of safety, security, safeguards, and environmental impact of nuclear energy facilities. The scope of the arrangement also covers a joint safety research exchange, as well as nuclear safety training for personnel," it said.

The signing ceremony was attended by Yousuf Al Otaiba, UAE Ambassador to the US, and other UAE officials.

Al Otaiba called the co-operation arrangement "a major milestone that will strengthen the mutual co-operation between the UAE and the US in the areas of nuclear safety, security, and safeguards".

## Land selection

Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (Enec), the body in charge of developing the UAE's nuclear programme, said in April that it had selected government land in Braka.

The site is 75km from the Saudi border on the Emirates Road, for the construction of the country's first four nuclear plants.

Construction of the first plant is due to begin late 2012, and operation is scheduled to start in 2017.

In March, Korea Electric Power Company (Kepco) awarded a \$5.59 billion (Dh20.6 billion) contract to Hyundai Engineering and Construction and Samsung C and T for the construction of the four plants.

By 2020 the UAE's electricity demand is expected to reach 40,000 megawatts (MW), an annual increase of about nine per cent.

With a current capacity of about 16,000MW, the government has said the nuclear option presents the most sustainable alternative to oil to power growth.