

SA plans next phase of new 2,500MW nuclear plant

By [Wendell Roelf](#)

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South Africa is forging ahead with plans for a new 2,500-megawatt nuclear power plant in a bid to boost energy security and wants to end the procurement process by 2024, the deputy energy minister said on Tuesday, 21 September.



Electricity pylons carrying power from Koeberg nuclear power plant are seen in Cape Town. Reuters/Sumaya Hisham

"We plan to issue the Request for Proposal (RFP) for 2,500MW nuclear programme at end of March 2022 and complete the procurement in 2024 to support the economic reconstruction and recovery plan and ensure security of energy supply," Nobhule Pamela said in an address to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), according to a copy of her speech.

With the government having only launched a request for information in June last year to test the market's appetite for the new plant, and the procurement process still in the early stages, there were no immediate details on estimated cost or completion date for the project.



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Shift away from coal

Last month, South Africa's energy regulator backed a long-term government plan to build new nuclear power units, a move that could help to shift the country away from coal and into less carbon-intensive means of generating electricity.

Africa's most industrialised economy has the continent's only operating nuclear plant, a 1,900MW facility outside Cape Town that was built under apartheid.

However, much of its electricity supply comes from a fleet of coal-fired power plants that emit harmful emissions into the air and many of which are set for closure within a decade as South Africa cuts down emissions.

South Africa, which experiences regular blackouts due to erratic power supply, has said it will look to expand its nuclear capacity at a pace and time it could afford, after abandoning in 2018 a massive nuclear expansion plan championed by former president Jacob Zuma.

Analysts had expressed serious concern about Zuma's project for an array of nuclear plants, totalling 9,600MW, because it would have put massive extra strain on South Africa's public finances as it faced a raft of credit rating downgrades.

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