

Indian Nuclear Plant Expected to Start

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Residents of Tamil Nadu, India, protesting in New Delhi on Dec. 8 against a Russian-built nuclear power plant. **Manish Swarup**

India plans to start up a Russian-built nuclear power plant within weeks, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said Friday, expressing confidence that the government can ease safety concerns that have prompted protests by local residents.

After talks in Moscow with President Dmitry Medvedev, whose country is eager to build more nuclear power plants abroad, Singh said the first two reactors at the Kudankulam plant were close to being activated.

The power station in the southern state of Tamil Nadu is one of several planned power projects that are seen as vital to plugging huge electricity shortages that have damaged economic growth.

However, protests by local people against the power station gathered pace after

the Fukushima accident in Japan in March.

"We are confident that we will be able to persuade some of these people that their concerns are adequately taken care of, that our nuclear plants are safe and sound and there is nothing to worry about with regards to their safety," Singh said. "I am therefore confident that in a couple of weeks we should be able to go ahead with operationalizing Kudankulam, and thereafter, by a period of six months, Kudankulam 2."

The two countries have been in talks to build two more reactors at Kudankulam. Itar-Tass cited the head of Rosatom, Sergei Kiriyenko, as saying Russia would provide India with a multibillion-dollar loan for the project, though no agreement was signed Friday.

Russia is keen to exploit its nuclear know-how, having already built two reactors in China and one in Iran that was plugged into the network in September.

Rising tensions over Tehran's nuclear program were on the leaders' agenda. Both countries urged Iran to cooperate with UN efforts to ensure it was not seeking nuclear arms, Russia and India said in a statement, but agreed that sanctions could be counterproductive.

Russia's defense industry cooperation with India is at an "unprecedented level," President Dmitry Medvedev said at a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Moscow on Friday, Bloomberg reported.

The two sides signed an accord on delivering 42 additional units to assemble Russia's Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter jets in India between 2013 and 2015.

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