Kenya signs China nuclear power deal

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Construction under way on the Taishan Nuclear Power Station outside Taishan City in Guandong province on December 8, 2013

Kenya has signed a deal with China as part of the east African nation's plans to have a nuclear power station by 2025, the Kenya Nuclear Electricity Board (KNEB) said Thursday.

Kenya plans to set up its a first nuclear power plant with a capacity of 1000 MW by 2025, the board said, with ambitions to boost that to 4000 MW by 2033, and to make nuclear electricity "a key component of the

country's energy" production.

The memorandum of understanding, signed in China, will enable Kenya to "obtain expertise from China by way of training and skills development, technical support in areas such as site selection for Kenya's nuclear power plants and feasibility studies," the KNEB statement said.

Kenya has already signed nuclear power cooperation agreements with Slovakia and South Korea, it added.

As part of those deals, over 10 Kenyan students are studying nuclear power engineering in South Korea.

As well as oil-fired stations, Kenya has in recent years focused power efforts on boosting sources from renewables such as geothermal, hydro and wind power.

With a fast-growing population, demand is climbing rapidly, and the country's hydro-electric capacity is strained by droughts and the impact of deforestation on rivers.

Geothermal power stations are sited on the Rift Valley, the divide of tectonic plates through East Africa.

Around three in 10 Kenyans have access to electricity, according to the World Bank, but that drops to only two in 10 in the poorest rural areas.

At present, South Africa is the only country in sub-Saharan Africa with active nuclear power plants.

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