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Construction of Jaitapur nuclear plant expected to begin by year-end : French ambassador

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The construction of [Jaitapur](#) nuclear power plant in neighbouring Maharashtra, the largest such project in the world, is expected to begin this year-end, says French [Ambassador](#) to [India Alexandre Ziegler](#).

He expressed confidence that the negotiations between entities of [France](#) and the [Indian government](#) would conclude by 2018-end.

[India](#) and [France](#) had on March 10 inked an agreement to expedite the [Jaitapur](#) nuclear power plant project, with the aim of commencing work at the site around the year-end, during [France President Emmanuel Macron's](#) visit to [India](#).

[Prime Minister Narendra Modi](#) and Macron had encouraged the [Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd \(NPCIL\)](#) and EDF [France](#) to accelerate the contractual discussions for the project, which is yet to see a consensus on key aspects such as **credit limits**.

Once installed, the [Jaitapur](#) project will be the largest nuclear power plant in the world, with a collective capacity of 9,900 MW.

"We have agreed on greater milestones during the presidential visit during last week. NPCIL (Nuclear Power Corporation) and EDF [France](#) have signed an industrial way forward agreement which means signing the whole industrial scheme over the project," Ziegler told [PTI](#) in an interview.

The French [ambassador](#) is in [Goa](#) to witness an Indo-French joint naval exercise 'Varuna-18', which commenced yesterday in the [Arabian Sea](#) off the [Goa](#) coast.

He said the industrial way forward agreement was "one of the major elements that was to be settled before we reach the final agreement".

"In the joint statement during the presidential visit, we agreed on an ambitious time table as we are supposed to end the negotiations by the end of this year," the French [ambassador](#) said.

"It is moving forward in a proper direction. We are aiming to start the construction work by the end of this year, which means we are aiming at concluding negotiations by then," he added.

Besides defence and space, nuclear [energy](#) is a key component of the Indo-French strategic partnership.

The Indo-French nuclear agreement was signed in 2008 and it was decided to build a nuclear power plant in Jaitapur, some 600 km south of [Mumbai](#). The power plant will have six reactors with a capacity of 1,650 MW each.

However, the EDF and the NPCIL are yet to agree on the cost per unit and the credit aspect to be provided by [France](#) to [India](#) for building the plant.

As per a joint statement issued in [Delhi](#) on March 10, "The understanding is based on the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Rules, 2011, and compliance of India's rules and regulations with the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage, ratified and notified to the IAEA".

Locals of [Jaitapur](#) and some organisations have been opposing the project in the area citing safety and environmental concerns. The BJP's alliance partner [Shiv Sena](#) has been backing the locals.

Ziegler said all the precautions from the safety point of view were taken into consideration while conceiving the plant.

"Safety is a major issue for any industrial project. It is specifically a major issue for a nuclear power plant. But we have the latest generation reactors. They are going to be the safest in the world.

"These reactors are purchased by several countries, including the UK. It is going to be the safest reactor operational in the world," asserted the [ambassador](#).

Seeking to allay safety concerns, he said two French officers who are incharge of the nuclear safety are closely monitoring the project.

"They would be closely monitoring the installation of the reactor as well, so I do not see any safety issue," he added.

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