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Burma 'has given up nuclear power research' - minister



Delegates said Lt Gen Hla Min's remarks were remarkably frank

Burma has abandoned research into nuclear power generation, its defence minister says.

The new government had "already given up all activities on nuclear issues", Lt Gen Hla Min told the Shangri-La Dialogue security forum in Singapore.

In 2010, a defecting Burmese soldier and mechanical engineer accused his country of starting work on a nuclear-weapons programme.

But Hla Min insisted that the country had never pursued nuclear weapons.

Delegates said his remarks - spoken through a translator - were remarkably frank and an illustration of the reforms sweeping Burma, reported Reuters news agency.

Hla Min acknowledged that Burma's previous government had begun "academic studies" on nuclear technology.

But he insisted that "it was not for defence, it was not for weapons", and said the research had "not progressed much due to our constraints".

North Korea ties

The new government had given up such activities, he said, and "we have no further plans to extend on this".

In the past, there have been repeated allegations that Burma was being helped in its nuclear research by North Korea - suggestions that re-emerged with the publication of diplomatic cables by Wikileaks in late 2010.

Burma had maintained political and military ties with North Korea in the past, Hla Min admitted, but "because of our opening and our new efforts, we have stopped such relationships with North Korea", Reuters reported.

He said current ties amounted to "just a regular relationship".

Hla Min dismissed a suggestion from the audience that the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), be allowed to inspect the country.

"We have nothing to check and nothing to see so it is irrelevant," he said.