

International Intelligence

Brazil Could Triple Uranium Output in 3 Years

This is the conclusion of the Brazilian Nuclear Industry (INB). With the opening of a new uranium mine at Santa Quitéria, in the state of Ceará within the next few months, Brazil's uranium production could jump from its current 400 tons to 1,200 tons a year, making Brazil the fifth largest uranium producer in the world, after Australia, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Canada.

With that production increase, Brazil will be able to supply not only the uranium needed for its two existing nuclear plants, and the third which was started and then stopped two decades ago, but the National Nuclear Energy Committee has reportedly proposed that Brazil could also begin exporting yellow cake, processed in its newly initiated uranium enrichment plant. *Gazeta Mercantil* argued in its June 22 editorial that such plans are too controversial to be adopted, given the international crisis over Iran's enrichment program, and domestic opposition from the environmentalists and austerity advocates. Any export of yellow cake would require approval by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The Brazilian Nuclear Program—a global review of where Brazil's nuclear industry stands and where it must go from here—is now in the hands of the executive branch, which is soon supposed to make final decisions, according to Brazilian news accounts. One of the big issues to be decided, is whether Brazil's already-begun third nuclear plant, Angra 3, will finally be finished, 20 years after its inception.

China and South Africa Sign Nuclear Agreements

A Chinese delegation led by Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and Foreign Minister Zhaoxing Li, signed agreements on nuclear energy cooperation while on an official visit to South Africa, according to the June 21 South African daily *Business Day*.

Tseliso Maqubela, chief director for nuclear power in the Minerals and Energy Department, said the agreement with China would “set a good framework for co-operation with a strategic partner. The agreement has a number of key points including . . . the mining of uranium [and] South Africa and China's joint development of nuclear reactors.” He went on to say, “Another key point of the agreement will be the exchange of personnel between South Africa and their Chinese counterparts” in the nuclear field.

They also discussed cooperation in certain areas on the development of South Africa's Pebble Bed Modular Reactor (PBMR). China is developing its own high-temperature reactor (HTR) based on similar German-derived technology. Both countries have already signed a memorandum of understanding where there would be cooperation on certain key components of the PBMR and China's HTR.

On the question of the PBMR, South African President Thabo Mbeki said that “The two countries have been communicating with each other with regards to this, and I am quite certain that we will be able to develop a system of cooperation between the two countries to develop this system of technology.”

EU-U.S.A. Declaration Challenges Russia

A declaration was issued after the June 21 talks in Vienna between U.S. President George Bush and Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel, in his capacity as head of the European Union. Stating that the EU and the United States “attach great importance to our relationship with Russia,” the declaration devolves into a laundry list of bad behavior attributed to Moscow: “We are concerned about some recent developments in Russia and the region and will work with Russia to promote energy security, the application of the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and full respect for human rights, including free and independent media and a vibrant civil society, and a resolution of frozen conflicts in the region.”

The U.S.A. and EU evidently intend to push all of these boilerplate issues onto the agenda of the St. Petersburg Group of 8 summit in July. In addition, the declaration reportedly criticizes Russia's policies vis à vis sanctions against Iran, relations with the Hamas movement, and relations with President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus.

Ivanov Sees Spread Of Nuclear Weapons

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said at a press conference on June 30 that more countries than ever have the potential to develop nuclear weapons, and warned that individual states and terrorists had been partly successful in attempts to obtain sensitive technologies. He said that export controls in Russia had to be tightened, adding that Russia would ensure tough controls over the Bushehr nuclear power station it is building in Iran.

In addition to the official five nuclear powers, there are India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea, he said; and he thought another 20 countries had the potential to develop the bomb. Ivanov warned that about 25 states either had ballistic missile systems or would be able to build them in the foreseeable future. “The arsenal of delivery means for weapons of mass destruction is vast,” he said, adding that some states, as well as certain organizations, primarily terrorist groups, “are attempting to gain access to sensitive technologies and products by any means, and sometimes they succeed in this.”

Ivanov criticized U.S. media reports that Iranian missile specialists were trained at an aerospace university in southern Russia. “We checked this information and confirmed it was a hoax,” he said. He said that it was a clear example of purposefully politicizing the issues of real cooperation, in the guise of efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. “I have to say that unfortunately, the U.S. often considers high-tech ties with Russia, including cooperation in space research and civilian nuclear energy, exclusively through the prism of the Iranian problem,” he said.