

Brazil to Count More on Wind and Nuclear Energy to Get Electricity

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According to Brazilian Energy Minister Edson Lobão, Brazil needs to increase its electricity generation capacity by 50% over the next 10 years. He described the task as an "enormous challenge" for the country.

"Adding 51,000 megawatts to the country's current power capacity, (or) an average of more than 5,000 megawatts per year, that would be an enormous challenge," said Lobão.

Nevertheless, he said that target may have to be revised depending on the impact of the global financial crisis in Brazil, since the country's electricity needs have been calculated on the basis of estimated economic growth of 4.9% annually, a forecast made prior to the financial meltdown.

The Brazilian Central Bank estimates that because of the crisis, the country will grow at a rate of around 3%, although the International Monetary Fund and other organizations are forecasting growth of between 1.8 and 2% in 2009 and 3.5% in 2010.

Lobão said that in addition to boosting output the country must shift to different methods of generating electricity; he said the goal is a reduction of at least 10 percentage points in the amount produced by hydroelectric plants, which today accounts for 85% of the country's electricity consumption.

He said the plans call for more wind energy plants and the construction of four new nuclear plants, in addition to the two currently in operation at Angra dos Reis, a coastal city 150 kilometers from Rio de Janeiro.

Construction of the four nuclear power plants is to be put out to tender in the middle of this year, according to Lobão, who said those plans could change depending on Brazil's economic performance.

Lobão added that the government hopes to encourage consumers to replace 10 million old, inefficient refrigerators with others that are more modern and energy-efficient and less contaminating.

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