

Brazil Announces Uranium Enriching Program and the World Yawns

Contributed by Luisa Massarani
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With Western opposition to Iran's nuclear ambitions continuing to make the headlines, Brazil launched earlier this month its first plant for 'enriching' uranium to use as fuel in nuclear power stations.

Science Minister Sérgio Rezende stressed that the move was only for peaceful purposes and was part of the government's plans to produce enough uranium for its nuclear power stations by 2014.

Brazil has the world's sixth largest reserves of uranium, but until now has had to send uranium to be processed in Canada and Europe before being able to use it at its two nuclear power stations.

In recent years, Brazil has been pouring money into its nuclear program. Between 2003 and 2006 its budget increased from US\$ 34.5 million to US\$ 113.2 million.

Writing in the Brazilian newspaper O Globo on May 5, the day the enrichment plant was launched, Rezende said that wind and solar power were not viable on a large scale in Brazil.

"Studies have shown that nuclear energy is the alternative way to respond to large scale energy demands in a clean and safe way," he wrote.

Brazil's nuclear program came under scrutiny in 2004 when it claimed that the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspections of its facilities were excessively intrusive.

In contrast with Iran, however, Brazil now appears to have the agency's confidence that it will enrich uranium solely for civilian purposes.

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