

After 22-Year Interruption Brazil Resumes Its Nuclear Program

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The Lula administration has authorized the resumption of plans to expand Brazil's nuclear power program, basically giving the green light for a third power plant. Work on the Angra 3 reactor, near Rio de Janeiro in the Brazilian Southeast, has been stalled for 22 years due to lack of money and political issues.

The administration of Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, has committed Eletronuclear, a company under government aegis to proceed with the development of Angra 3, as part of an overall plan to ensure electricity demand for the country's booming economy.

"Things have changed a lot, and today it's clearer to everyone that nuclear energy has a role to play in the Brazilian electrical system, just like the other forms of producing electricity, which can't be dismissed," said Leonam Guimarães, an Eletronuclear spokesman.

Guimarães also said that Eletronuclear has pledged to comply with each of 60 conditions the Brazilian government set in granting the country a license to restart work on the third reactor.

Brazil has become the world's tenth largest energy consumer and the third consumer in the Western hemisphere behind the United States and Canada, according to the US Department of Energy.

Brazil currently has two nuclear plants in operation which supply about 3% of the country's electricity, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Other countries in the region that use nuclear power for generating electricity are Mexico (5% of electricity); Argentina 7%; Canada, 16% and US, 19%.

France leads in electrical power generation from nuclear reactors, 78%, followed by Lithuania 72%, Slovakia, 57% and Belgium 54%.

Brazil's two reactors went into use in 1985 and 2000. They supply about half the electrical power used in the state of Rio de Janeiro, according to Eletronuclear. Eletronuclear plans to begin construction work on Angra 3 in February and hopes that it will generate electricity by 2014.

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