Electric Power - Brazil

Brazil on cusp of US$6.5bn nuclear expansion

By Michael Place - Monday, November 19, 2012

Investments in Brazilian nuclear energy projects will exceed US$6.5bn by the end of the decade, the sector's national association Aben has told BNamericas.

Aben president Edson Kuramoto says the industry has made a full recovery after the negative publicity surrounding Japan's Fukushima disaster last year.

Brazil will boast at least four new nuclear generation facilities before 2030. Projects underway include the Angra 3 power plant in Rio de Janeiro state that will increase the country's installed nuclear capacity from 1.99GW to 3.40GW by 2016.

"The nuclear area in Brazil is extensive, covering electric power generation, the production of radiopharmaceuticals and radioisotopes as well as the whole fuel cycle," Kuramoto said.

"There are also investments in uranium enrichment facilities, gasification and production of uranium minerals.

"The nuclear submarine project is in full swing, with the construction of the test facility reactor that will be used in the submarine."

Kuramoto says the industry has rebounded strongly after a 9.0-magnitude earthquake on Japan's east coast triggered the meltdown of Fukushima's reactors.

While the incident prompted Germany, Switzerland and Italy to abandon their nuclear power ambitions, Brazil has no such plans.

"The accident did have an impact, but it was much smaller than what analysts had predicted," Kuramoto said.

"More than 20 months have passed and many countries have announced the construction of new plants and others have decided to begin nuclear programs.

"The impact has been diluted and the pre-Fukushima growth rate is returning. If not for the global economic crisis, growth in the industry would be even more pronounced now than before the accident."

According to Kuramoto, the expansion of nuclear power will provide crucial reinforcement to Brazil's energy matrix.

"Due to the exhaustion of the country's hydroelectric potential beginning in 2030, the participation of large-scale thermoelectric plants will increase and so will new opportunities for nuclear plants," he said.

"Wind energy depends on an intermittent source and therefore does not give greater security to the national electrical system. But they are complimentary and will be utilized.

"In the same way other renewable sources will be used in an intelligent way, guaranteeing the grid's reliability."