

Nuclear's second wind

Sunday, 01 June 2008



Governments the world over are taking another look at nuclear power.

World-wide revival

As countries seek to establish independent, secure energy supplies and to cut greenhouse gas emissions in line with the demands of the Kyoto Protocol, nuclear is once again being considered as an affordable and viable low-carbon source of energy.

Countries that were once committed to a nuclear phase-out are now having second thoughts. And supporters of the technology are going to great lengths to paint nuclear fission as a safe source of energy, pointing out that coal-mining accidents and gas explosions account for hundreds of fatalities each year.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), there are currently 435 nuclear reactors operating around the world and a further 30 facilities under construction.

France's AREVA, the world's largest supplier of nuclear reactors, openly talked about a nuclear revival during the presentation of its 2007 financial results. The state-run firm predicts more than 500 GWe worth of new nuclear power plant orders or life extension orders for existing facilities will be made worldwide by 2030.

Over the next two decades, many European countries will have to replace generating capacity as plants come to the end of their service life. China, Japan, India, Brazil, the UK and the US are all looking to expand their programmes and new markets are also emerging in Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Within MENA itself, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, and the GCC member countries are all considering building nuclear power plants. Some of them

already have research reactors up and running. Iran, of course, is much further down the line.