

South Africa to look at nuclear power

It makes good sense to make South Africa a seller of power to other African countries

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Alec Erwin, South Africa's Minister of Public Enterprises, says the country will look at nuclear generated power as a replacement for the country's base load power needs in future.

He says as South Africa sought to reduce dependence on coal fuelled power stations, a viable base load power source would be needed. "Nuclear is such a viable source," noted Erwin speaking at the High Temperature Reactor (HTR) conference in Sandton today.

He added that government was currently planning the construction of 20-30 Pebble Bed Modular Reactors (PBMR) that will generate 5,000 megawatts of power. He mentioned South Africa's large resources of fuel as potential fuel for the reactors.

The first reactor would be commissioned in 2013-2014, said Erwin. He valued government's future investment in the development of the PBMR at hundreds of millions of dollars. He said the technology was also favorable to supply the rest of Africa's energy needs. Other sources of energy would be studied by government but that the current preference was nuclear.