

S. Africa PBMR Project Status

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.energy/2007-02/msg00358.html>

- *From:* dave.walters@xxxxxxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* 25 Feb 2007 00:35:44 -0800
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S. Africa PBMR Project Status

Under development since 1993, the PBMR project entails the building of a demonstration reactor project near Cape Town and a pilot fuel plant near Pretoria.

The current schedule is to start construction in 2008 and for the demonstration plant to be completed four years later. The first commercial PBMR modules are planned for 2016.

Since 2004, the South African government has allocated significant funding to the project, while the Minister of Public Enterprises, Mr Alec Erwin, stated an intent to eventually produce 4000MW to 5000MW of power from pebble bed reactors in South Africa. This equates to between 20 and 30 PBMR reactors of 165MW each.

In June 2004, the South African cabinet also approved a programme to train nuclear scientists.

The government funding enabled PBMR to secure the contracts for the development of key components such as the turbine machinery and the helium test facility. In November 2004, a contract was awarded to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) of Japan for the Basic Design and Research and Development of the PBMR helium driven Turbo Generator System, as well as the core barrel assembly.

An important milestone was also reached on 22 November 2004 with the turning of the first sod for the construction of a helium test facility (HTF) at Pelindaba. The HTF is a high-temperature, high-pressure rig which will test the complete helium cycle system for the PBMR. It will also simulate the fuel-handling, reactivity control and shut-down systems.