

Bolivia Says Nuclear Program Will Yield Energy, Health, Agro-Industrial Benefits



La Paz, February 19 (RHC-EFE) — Bolivia is planning a broad-based nuclear program that will help diversify the country's energy matrix and also bring benefits to other areas including the health sector and agro-industry, the government said Wednesday.

Bolivian Hydrocarbons and Energy Minister Luis Alberto Sanchez provided details on those work areas in a statement. In the health sphere, Sanchez said a cyclotron will be built to produce radioisotopes for use in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer and neurological and cardiological pathologies.

The nuclear program also will help contribute to food security and increase farm output by employing gamma irradiation to improve seed quality and decrease the rate at which food spoils, thus allowing it to be shipped over longer distances.

The use of nuclear power will help diversify Bolivia's energy matrix, which currently is heavily dependent on natural gas-fired plants and hydropower, while the country's fuel-cycle management strategy will allow it to explore the potential of radioactive minerals, the minister said.

The program also calls for the construction of a research reactor for the training of Bolivian professionals who will eventually lead the project.

Bolivia's government has signed a letter of intent on nuclear technology with France's Atomic Energy and Alternative Energies Commission, or CEA, and has met with Russian government officials and executives with that country's Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation.

An International Atomic Energy Agency delegation that visited Bolivia last November said it will support the Andean nation in its effort to build a peaceful nuclear energy program.

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