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Brazil Inaugurates Uranium Enrichment Center Capable of Producing Fuel for Country's Power Plants

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By **PETER MUELLO**

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil May 6, 2006 (AP)— Brazil has inaugurated a uranium enrichment center capable of producing nuclear fuel for the South American country's power plants.

Brazil's enrichment center will save millions of dollars the country now spends to enrich fuel at Urenco, the European enrichment consortium, Science and Technology Minister Sergio Rezende told the government news agency Agencia Brasil Saturday.

Iran is seeking to produce the same fuel, but is facing international pressure against doing so. Brazil like Iran has signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and Brazil's constitution bans the military use of nuclear energy.

Brazil has the world's sixth-largest uranium reserves, but has been unable to use the fuel for energy without shipping it to and from Urenco.

Rezende stressed Brazil's commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy at a ceremony Friday at the plant built on a former coffee plantation in Resende, 90 miles west of Rio de Janeiro.

In 2004, the Brazilian government drew attention when it refused unrestricted inspections by the International Atomic Energy Association, arguing that full access to its centrifuges would put it at risk of industrial espionage.

Inspectors said they were satisfied after monitoring the uranium that comes in and out of the centrifuges.

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Brazil's nuclear program began during a 1964-85 military dictatorship, and the ruling generals had secret plans to test an atomic bomb underground in the Amazon jungle. The idea was scrapped in 1990.

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