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Ageing Workforce Becoming A Matter For Serious Concern, Says IAEA

4 Sept (NucNet): The management of nuclear knowledge has emerged as a growing challenge, with the ageing of the industry's workforce becoming "a matter of serious concern" for some member states, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said.

In its annual report* for 2005, the IAEA says in a number of countries new technical staff are needed to replace retirees. A new generation of nuclear scientists and engineers is also needed in countries planning to expand the use of nuclear energy, the report concludes.

Initiatives aimed at tackling the problem include expansion of the agency's International Nuclear Information System (INIS), which contains hundreds of thousands of records and documents. Students at 273 universities now have free access to INIS and the system has nearly one million authorised users.

The report said that at the end of 2005, there were 443 reactor units operating around the world accounting for about 16% of electricity production, keeping pace with steady growth in the global electricity market.

Most of the 26 nuclear power plants under construction worldwide are in Asia (15 units) and four new units were connected to the grid during 2005 – two in Japan and one each in India and South Korea. One laid-up unit, Pickering-1, was reconnected to the grid in Canada.

Of the 443 units in operation, 79 (18%) had been in operation for more than 30 years and 63 units (14%) for more than 25 years.

There was a net increase in nuclear generating capacity of 2,300 megawatts (MW) in 2005 taking into account new units connected to grids and plant retirements. The report also acknowledges the important role of licence renewals for continued nuclear electricity generation in several countries.

On uranium resources and supply, the report recalls the findings of an IAEA symposium held in June 2006 in Vienna, Austria, which concluded that uranium resources are adequate to fuel the projected expansion of nuclear power.

"However, it was emphasised that additional investment was needed to ensure that uranium mining and milling activities would be able to meet the anticipated expansion in global nuclear power generation," the report said.

**The annual report was published in advance of the IAEA's general conference of member states, which opens on 18 September 2006 in Vienna.*

The report is on the IAEA's web site (http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2006/annual_report2005.html) in English, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish

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