

AII ABOARD THE INDIAN NUCLEAR GRAVYTRAIN

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A former Australian Deputy High Commissioner to **India** has urged the Australia's **uranium** industry to prepare itself for the opportunity presented by the thawed Federal Govt attitude to exporting Australian yellowcake to India.

Ahead of a **uranium conference in Adelaide, Australia**, next week at which he is a keynote speaker, Rakesh Ahuja, says the implications for Australia in India's quest for energy security are huge.

"India is actively scouting for uranium imports to feed its expanding atomic power infrastructure and for prospective investments in related assets overseas. It has already signed supply agreements with Canada, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Namibia. Major western players and Japan are also negotiating the transfer of state-of-the-art nuclear energy technology to India.

"Australia has now approved the sale of uranium to India, subject to a rigorous bilateral safeguards agreement now under negotiation. There is no doubt that once the agreement is signed, opportunities for Australian uranium exports to India and for attracting Indian inward investment in this sector, will rise dramatically," he said.

"Australia's uranium sector has several factors in its favour in this regard, including competitive pricing, commercial transparency and proven logistics."

Ahuja says India's economic growth remains vulnerable to energy insecurity.

"By 2030, India's energy import dependency is expected to exceed 53% of total energy consumption. It already imports 75% of its oil needs, 20% of its gas and 20% of its coal, the latter including billions of dollars worth of coal from Australia.

"If the plausible target of 6%-7% GDP growth is to be met, increased power generation is an imperative." India sees nuclear power as a vital alternative to its massive fossil fuel dependency and aims to increase nuclear power generation from 4,780MW to 20,000MW by 2020, Ahuja says.

"India has an impressive civilian nuclear power program. However, its existing nuclear power plants are operating at below average capacity because of uranium shortages – and yet more plants are coming on stream."

Ahuja says Australia possesses more than 42% of the world's proven low-cost uranium reserves.

"The Australian uranium industry can play a major role in satisfying India's hunger for energy resources and thus promote Australia's long-term economic and political interests in a country of increasing significance in the Indo-Pacific region," he said.