

# On-line analysis systems go east

It is a good time to be a supplier of online, on-belt coal analysis systems in China. The country has been placing growing emphasis on the need to regularise its domestic coal trade and one side-effect is new investment in coal quality monitoring systems.

With the growing likelihood that China's IPPs will be increasingly free to source coal supplies from overseas (*see page 20 of this issue*), domestic producers, especially state-owned mines and those active in export markets, have no choice but to invest in quality control systems.

## Coal-prep in China

So China is developing a network of coal preparation stations, often serving a substantial number of different mines in a region. Each station needs to scan incoming coal qualities not only to monitor the output of the mines themselves but also to carry out blending to match market requirements.

Bretby Gammatech is one of a number of manufacturers of such systems determined to make its presence felt in this potentially massive market. It is currently building two on-belt ash monitors at the coal prep plant at Mugaujie in China.

"The units are monitoring raw coal into the plant and washed product coming out of it" says managing director Paul Taylor. "It is typical of the kind of application, and the kind of user, which our system is specifically designed for."

Traditionally on-belt systems monitor the level of ash, and other materials, in a coal stream by detecting the low-level of radiation emanating from coal dirt. Bretby's flagship product, the Natural Gamma Coal Quality Monitor, manages without the use of radioactive isotopes. Taylor says, "That makes it very attractive to users who are concerned about potential health risks. In Russia for example - another big potential market -

systems with radioactive isotopes are actually banned."

## Indian opportunities

It is not only in China and Russia where the demand for on-belt analysis systems is growing. Another factor which is helping to boost global demand is the proscription in India of coal imports with ash content above 34 per cent. While applications of on-belt monitors have tended largely to be at or near the mine head, this is one which

could lead to the use of such units at more and more terminals.

The extension of use of on-belt monitors represents opportunities for sampling and testing specialist too: CMT, based at Richards Bay, South Africa, for example is currently involved in contracts to check the effectiveness of online analytical systems at mines throughout South Africa. Any plans for expansion overseas? A spokesperson at CMT simply said, "Watch this space."

Meanwhile, to the west, Columbia and Venezuela represent opportunities for sales of online analyser systems too. One mine industry veteran there could not recall seeing a single online on-belt analyser in the region. "Low-cost production means this kind of investment tends to be pushed back in the priority list, but they will come, I am sure," he remarked. □

*Online coal analysis systems: a fast-growing, highly competitive market (Picture courtesy Bretby Gammatech)*



## Sampling and testing systems - international news round-up

Incolabs, in a partnership with US-based Sampling Associates International, has a reputation for bold expansion into new geographical markets. Last year it opened a new coal and petcoke laboratory in Mexico, to add to existing facilities in Maracaibo, Venezuela, and Santa Marta, Colombia. The company now has 14 labs around the world.

Coal & Materials Testing (CMT), the sole onsite contractor providing product assessment services at Richards Bay, has expanded its sampling and testing service beyond its coal powerbase; against stiff opposition from all the big

names in the global testing and sampling industry it recently won the contract to offer onsite sampling and testing service for all South Africa's iron ore exports.

Scantech has won a A\$4 mill tender to supply its elemental analysers to Macquarie Generation, Australia, and a A\$1 mill contract from a Western Australian coal burning power generator. Environmental legislation, which became effective from the start of 2003, means that New South Wales coal-fired generators can only burn coal with a sulphur content of less than 8 per cent. □