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Philippines inaugurate twin 112.5 MWe geothermal plants

by
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The Philippines set another milestone in its history of geothermal energy development with simultaneous completion and start for commercial operations of two geothermal plants of 112.5 MWe capacity each on June 29, 1983. Tongonan I, on the Island of Leyte, has 3 x 37.5 MWe Mitsubishi turbine generators while Palinpinon I in the southern part of Negros Island is generating electricity from 3 x 37.5 MWe Fuji Electric units. These new power plants have increased the country's total installed geothermal generating capability by 40 percent to 781 MWe and are expected to save around \$135 million worth of imported crude oil annually.

Two state-owned firms—the Philippine National Oil Company-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) and the National Power Corporation (NPC)—orchestrated their efforts to set up these first 100 percent Filipino-operated geothermal power plants. With technical support from the New Zealand Government and financial assistance from Japan's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), PNOC-EDC explored and developed these geothermal fields while NPC installed the power plant and transmission lines.

At present, Tongonan I supplies the power demand in Leyte and neighboring Samar Island which includes several big industries like the copper smelter plant of the Philippine Associated Smelting and Refining Corporation (PASAR), and the fertilizer manufacturing project of the Philippine Phosphate Fertilizer Corporation (PHILPHOS). Twelve production wells supply the plant with steam from a proven reserve of more than 18,000 MWe-years in the Tongonan Geothermal Field. Palinpinon I, in turn, supplies the power requirement of the Island of Negros and is in stand-by for the anticipated link to the Island of Panay.

The era of commercial geothermal energy utilization was initiated in early 1977 when the first 3 MWe pilot plant was installed and inaugurated in Tongonan, Leyte Island in July of that year. Now Tongonan has 781 MWe installed capacity—geothermal energy which accounts for nearly 20 percent of the country's power requirement.

Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos and the First Lady and Minister of Human Settlement, Mrs. Imelda R. Marcos, inaugurated the Tongonan I geothermal power plant. On hand to witness the historic occasion were Energy Minister Geronimo Z. Velasco and several government dignitaries and representatives of the private sector. □