

Laos power plant begins commercial operation

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The Nam Lik 1-2 hydropower plant, located in the central province of Vientiane has commenced commercial operation as the demand for electricity in Laos continues to rise.

China International Water Electric Corporation (CWE) and Electricite du Laos (EDL) held an official opening ceremony for the US\$150 million facility in Naxeng village of Feuang district, Vientiane province, some 150km from the capital.

CWE holds a 90 per cent share in the joint venture while the rest of the investment shares belong to EDL. CWE is subsidised by China Three Gorges Corporation, one of the largest hydropower companies in China.

The 100-megawatt power plant will deliver all of its generated power to EDL, a state-owned enterprise which holds a monopoly for providing all electricity to consumers in Laos.

The Nam Lik 1-2 hydropower project was started in 2004. The project developer signed a MOU with the Lao government in 2004 in order to conduct a project feasibility study and an investment concession was granted in 2006.

According to the concession agreement, the company will build, own and operate the power plant for 25 years before handing it over to the Lao government.

Construction of the power plant began in 2007 and took about 39 months to complete.

Nam Lik 1-2 Power Company president Wang Yu said that construction finished ahead of schedule thanks to support from the Lao and Chinese governments and cooperation from all concerned sectors.

{showhide image="plugins/content/showhidecontent/images/arrow-1-32x32-blue-down.png" changeimage="plugins/content/showhidecontent/images/arrow-1-32x32-blue-up.png"} EDL managing director Khammany Inthirath said the commencement of commercial operations at the hydropower plant is timely, as the country is facing a severe shortage of electrical power for domestic use.

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“In the last dry season, we imported large amounts of electricity for domestic consumption. We actually imported more than we exported, and so the Nam Lik 1-2 hydropower plant will help the country to reduce its electrical imports,” he said.

According to a report from EDL, electrical consumption in Laos sees a 10 to 20 per cent increase every year due to expanding industries and a rising population. Although Laos has many power plants, most of them export their output to Thailand.

The move has forced Laos to re-import the electrical power it needs to secure the continued operation of an expanding industrial sector in the country.

The government is now promoting investment in the construction of small and medium sized hydropower plants to supply domestic consumption.

The government also plans to expand the national electricity grid to all districts by 2015 and 90 per cent of Lao households by 2020.

At present, about 70 per cent of Lao families have access to electricity.

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