



25-MW solar power plant unveiled in GenSan

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GENERAL SANTOS CITY -- Renewable energy firm Harbor Star Energy Corp. (HSEC) unveiled its PHP2.2 billion solar power plant project in a coastal village here Thursday.

HSEC and local officials led the formal commissioning of the 25-megawatt (MW) solar power plant in the company's 56-hectare site in Purok Changco, Barangay Bawing.

Geronimo Bella Jr., HSEC chairman and president, said the plant -- the first in the city and considered as one of the biggest in Mindanao -- is now fully operational and ready to provide additional power supply to local consumers through power utility South Cotabato II Electric Cooperative (Socoteco II).

Bella said preparations are underway for the streaming of the plant by next month to the Mindanao power grid. He said the newly-completed plant is the initial phase of its planned multi-billion solar power generation plant in the area.

"It's a big investment and we plan to expand it in the coming years to produce not just 25 MW, but maybe even 100 MW because the technology is available," he said.

HSEC partnered with Astronergy Development Gensan, Inc. (ADGI) for the construction of the power plant, which is composed of more than 80,000 solar panels.

ADGI, which has acquired the permits, licenses, and entitlements to operate solar power plants here with an initial capacity of 25 MW and expandable to 75MW, initially pursued the project four years ago but later linked up with HSEC to facilitate its implementation.

HSEC, a wholly owned subsidiary of marine services provider Harbor Star Shipping Services, Inc., acquired 60 percent of ADGI's shareholdings in November 2017 and eventually expanded it to 85 percent in April 2018.

Bella said their investment in the city, which is the first power production venture for the company, was "not an accident."

"GenSan is fast becoming a metropolis and we want to be a part of that growth, we want to be partners with the city," he said.

Bella said they found the city ideal for the renewable energy project due to the warm weather, especially in the coastal areas, and readily-available sites.

"The use of the site was very ideal since we did not have to do much clearing of trees as it was largely barren," he added.

Mayor Ronnel Rivera said the operationalization of the solar power plant is a major boost to the expanding economy of the city, which hosts six of the country's seven tuna canneries and related industries.

Rivera said the city's power demand has continually increased these past years due to the entry of major investments, among them shopping malls, hotels, and other property developments.

"We are in constant negotiations with power producing companies because the city is turning into a metropolis. The city is developing every day and we're seeing more investments coming in," he told reporters.

Socoteco II general manager, Crisanto Sotelo, said the additional power from the solar power plant will bring its contracted supplies to 230 MW.

Sotelo said the area's power demand currently stands at 170 MW and is expected to further increase by the end of the year.

Socoteco II serves the city, the entire province of Sarangani and the municipalities of Polomolok and Tupi in South Cotabato. (PNA)

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