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THEUN-HINBOUN HYDRO EXPANSION PROJECT POWERS UP

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Vientiane Times, January 12, 2013

The inauguration of the Theun-Hinboun hydropower expansion project officially took place in Khounkham district, Khammuan province, yesterday after construction began in 2009.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad and representatives from various government agencies, local authorities and foreign guests.

The expanded Theun-Hinboun Hydropower Project is an important, effective and systematic development project connected to phase I of the Theun-Hinboun Hydropower Project, said Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines Khammany Inthirath.

The expansion of the hydro scheme enables water to be stored for use in electricity production and for release into the Nam Theun River, he said.

The expansion project consists of the new Nam Gnouang powerhouse and a new turbine at the Theun-Hinboun powerhouse project, giving 280MW of extra production capacity or 1,750 GWh of electricity per year, Mr Khammany said.

The Theun-Hinboun dam now has a total generating capacity of 500MW or 3,000 GWh of electricity per year. Of the electricity generated by the Nam Gnouang powerhouse, 440MW will be sold to Thailand and the remaining 60MW to Electricite du Laos (EDL) for local supply.

The project includes a dam and reservoir, a headrace tunnel and the installation of 230 kV and 115 kV transmission lines.

Up until the year 2012, this project has produced an average of 5,260 MWh of electricity per day, selling an average of 5,136 MWh to the Energy Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) per day.

The Theun-Hinboun hy-dropower expansion project includes many sub-components, combining modern technology and know-how with environmental awareness, Mr Khammany said.

The expanded Theun-Hinboun Hydropower Project is a 6.2 trillion kip (US\$720 million) joint venture with 60 percent of shares held by EDL, 20 percent by GMS Power and 20 percent by Statkraft.

The Theun-Hinboun Power Company Limited (THPC) has a 27 year concession on the project from 2013 to 2039. During this time the Lao government will earn US\$1.75 billion through dividends of US\$1.2 billion, royalty fees of US\$229 million, and taxes of US\$325 million.

At the same time the Theun-Hinboun Power Company has invested US\$60 million in resettling local communities, improving the environment and contributing to the development of education, public health and other local activities.

The company has also built infrastructure to benefit the local community such as access roads and created jobs for many local people.

Laos is rich in hydropower potential and the great majority of that potential remains as yet untapped, said GMS Power representative Dr Subin Pinkayan.

“We are all aware of the international concern over how hydropower projects in this region are to be developed,” he added.

There is no doubt that poorly planned and executed projects can cause harm to the environment and may not distribute benefits properly, Dr Subin said.

The power and revenue generated by Theun-Hinboun have been important in contributing to the growth of the Lao economy over the last two decades, said Statkraft CEO Christian Rynning-Tonnesen.

“Statkraft has been in partnership with and has full confidence in Laos and its government as investment partners for mutual benefit. That’s why we have supported this expansion project and why we remain fully committed investors in Laos,” Mr Rynning-Tonnesen said.

In a world facing damaging global warming due to emissions of greenhouse gases, more renewable energy sources in general and hydropower in particular are of growing importance in fighting serious climate change, he added.



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