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New Hydropower Station Promotes Laos' Economic Growth

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The Namtha River No.1 Hydropower Station is the first overseas "build-operate-transfer" (BOT) investment project constructed by CSG. [Photo by Lin Dandan/China Southern Power Grid]

The Ministry of Energy and Mines of the Lao People's Democratic Republic confirmed on June 21, 2019 that the commercial operation date (COD) of the Namtha River No.1 Hydropower Station was April 1, 2019.

The hydropower station, jointly invested and constructed by China Southern Power Grid (CSG) and Electricite du Laos (EDL), is CSG's first overseas hydropower project under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Located over the Namtha River, the branch off the Mekong River's left bank in Bokeo Province, the station is a hydropower hub with functions of power generation, flood control and irrigation.

The station is a build-operate-transfer (BOT) project with a four-year construction period and a 28-year franchise period.

The total installed capacity of the station is 168MW.

The agreement of the Namtha River No.1 Hydropower Station project was signed on June 16, 2010 and its construction started in November 2014.

After conquering difficulties of complicated geological conditions and inconvenient transportation, the power plant realized reservoir impoundment on June 26, 2018 and three power generator units went into operation on Oct 26 the same year.



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According to project heads, it took the constructors only 13 days to adjust the three power generator units after being connected to the grid and they were able to play effective roles in flood prevention and control during the next rainy season.

The Namtha River No.1 Hydropower Station construction was the most difficult hydropower project in Laos and required resettlement of a huge population of domestic immigrants, which added another challenge to the project.

During more than three years of construction, 11 resettlement sites were built and nearly 10,000 residents moved to their new homes.

Actions like constructions of roads, water supply facilities and power grids were also taken, offering the local people better lives and laying a foundation for a stable and sound overall outcome.

At the same time, the construction of the project also drove the Chinese equipment and technology to "go global" and promoted economic development and industrial structure adjustment in the northern regions of Laos, which deepened the traditional friendship between China and Laos.

In addition to the residents' settlement problem, extreme weather was another barrier to smooth construction. Liu Jian, general manager of the project, recalled that there was a catastrophic flood on August 2, 2015 which swamped the roads linking the construction site to the nearby areas.

After the flood, services of electricity, drinking water and telecommunication were also cut off. Staff members were trapped, making the project hard to carry forward.

As the hydropower station goes into service, local people are able to focus on improving their living standards.

Liu added that the project helped to improve the river environment by protecting the ecological environment of the reservoir and promoting regional economic growth.

Meanwhile, the reservoir-based shipping and tourism industries will be developed.



At an eye-catching position in front of the new houses of resettlement sites appear the Chinese words of "Fuyou, Ping'an and Xingfu", which mean "prosperity, safety and happiness." [Photo by Lin Dandan/China Southern Power Grid]

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