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Mexico Inaugurates Two Wind-powered Facilities In Oaxaca State

by LADB Staff

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Federal authorities have begun strong efforts to promote alternative energy in Mexico, with some of the initial focus on developing wind-powered electricity. Two new wind-powered electrical facilities were inaugurated in Oaxaca state in mid-January, as part of a long-term project to develop this type of energy in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Some local authorities are also becoming involved in promoting and developing alternative energy, with the city of Toluca planning to launch the first phase of the Parque Ecologico Cacalomacan in March. The facility will produce energy from both solar and wind power. Plants provide power for private companies.

The two new wind farms at La Ventosa, near the coastal community of Juchitan de Zaragoza in Oaxaca state, were developed to supply electricity to the private sector. The two facilities were inaugurated on the same date, with President Felipe Calderon on hand to mark the occasion. The larger of the two facilities, constructed by Spain-based energy company Acciona Energia, is expected to supply about 250 megawatts of electricity to Mexico's giant cement manufacturer CEMEX by the end of 2009. CEMEX chief executive officer Lorenzo Zambrano said the wind-powered plant, known as the Eurus project, would eventually account for 25% of the electricity used by CEMEX at the domestic level. The switch to wind power, said Zambrano, will help CEMEX reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide by 600,000 metric tons a year. Spokespersons at Acciona Energia said the Eurus wind farm is the largest of its kind in Latin America, with its output sufficient to power a city with a population of about 500,000 inhabitants.

A second plant, constructed by Spanish company Iberdrola at a cost of US\$170 million, will have the capacity to produce about 80 MW of electricity. A permit approved by the Comision Reguladora de Energia (CRE) indicates the facility will supply electrical energy to such companies as Barcel, Bimbo, Apasco, Cerveceria Cuauhtemoc-Moctezuma, Conductores Monterrey, Crisoba, Dal-Tile de Mexico, Kimberly Clark de Mexico, Lala, Prolec, Proeza, Zinc Nacional, and some retail operations of the Soriana and HEB chains. The Calderon administration hopes that the two facilities will serve as a prototype for other projects, including plants for state-run utilities to distribute electrical power to residential customers.

Energy Secretary Georgina Kessel said the government is targeting production of wind-powered electricity at 2,500 MW by 2012. At present, wind power accounts for less than 100 MW of Mexico's installed electrical capacity of 50,000 MW. But most projects are likely to be constructed in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. "Prospects for wind-related energy are varied in Mexico," Eduardo Rincon, secretary of the Asociacion Nacional de Energia Solar (ANES), said at a forum on alternative energy. "For example, there are places where the wind is extremely good, such as the coasts of Oaxaca, especially the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. But there are other areas where wind is not sufficient and where large projects cannot be viable."

Calderon promotes environmental benefits of alternative energy Calderon said Mexico would continue to place a strong emphasis on developing alternative energy to reduce carbon emissions. "If we don't do something about this problem of climate change, it probably could become-

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