



Mexican president inaugurates large-scale solar power plant

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Mexican President Felipe Calderon inaugurated a large-scale solar power plant that he touted as the region's first, a pilot facility in the northwestern state of Baja California that features 4,000 photovoltaic panels and 1 MW in generating capacity.

The plant is "the first in Mexico, the first in all of Latin America," the president said, adding that it will serve as an experimental model for state-owned electric utility Comision Federal de Electricidad in its drive to develop renewable energy.

He noted that at present 26 percent of the electricity produced in Mexico comes from renewable sources, "from water, wind or sun," in which no oil, natural gas or diesel is consumed.

The 2010-2024 National Development Plan set a goal of increasing clean energy's share of total electricity production in Mexico to 35 percent.

Calderon also stressed the need to further develop a model that is currently in place in other parts of the country and which involves mounting solar panels on houses to supply needed electricity and connecting them to the national energy grid.

The plant inaugurated Friday was built in the town of Santa Rosalia, in the center of the Baja California peninsula, by the Microm firm, a Grupo Condumex unit that specializes in renewable energy.

Condumex is owned by Mexican magnate Carlos Slim, the world's wealthiest person with a net worth of \$68 billion.

The plant generates electricity using photovoltaic panels, while a solar-tracking technology orients the panels so they are perpendicular to the sun's rays from dawn to dusk.

A U.S. firm, SolFocus Inc., announced in March the launch of a "landmark solar power plant" near the border town of Tecate in Baja California state, located north of Baja California Sur.

It said in a press release that construction of the planned 450 MW plant, to be built in partnership with Mexican land and real estate developer Grupo Musa and U.S.-based energy developer Synergy Technologies, would start in late 2012 and that the plant would be operational before the end of 2013.

Northern Mexico possesses the "third greatest solar resource in the world, making it an ideal location for this project," the press release, dated March 29, said. EFE

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