



Sarangani traders hail coal-fired power plant

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MAASIM, Sarangani—Businessmen hailed the groundbreaking of a 200-megawatt coal-fired power plant in coastal Kamanga village Friday afternoon here.

Marfin Tan, a fishing tycoon, told reporters this would encourage more investors to come in and invest capital in the area. Governor Miguel Dominguez, Trade Secretary Gregory Domingo and Tomas Alcantara, president and chairman of the Alcantara Group of Companies, led the groundbreaking rites.

Tan said the \$450-million coal plant project would not only generate jobs but would stabilize power supply in Central Mindanao.

“The construction and eventual operation of the power plant will fill up the power void expected to hit Mindanao by 2014. This development is very good for business,” Tan said.

He told reporters that the erratic power supply and unpredictable brownouts disrupt the normal flow of business.

The site where the coal power plant project will be built has been identified as part of the special economic zone.

Joseph Nocos, Conal Holdings Corp. vice president, said the coal would come from Kalimantan, Indonesia.

Conal Holdings is the parent company of Sarangani Energy Corp., which oversees the implementation of the Kamanga Power Plant project.

Conal Holdings is 60 percent owned by the publicly listed Alsons Consolidated Resources and the rest held by the Electricity Generating Public Co. Ltd., Thailand’s biggest power producer.

Alsons is owned by the family of Sarangani Gov. Miguel Dominguez.

Nocos said that Japan-based Toyota Tsusho is also eyeing direct investment in the project. He allayed fears of a pollution problem, saying the technology that would be used in the project would address it.

“This would be the most modern and cleanest power plant in Asia,” Nocos said. To address the discharge of carbon dioxide in the air, Nocos said, the company has put up a 7,500-hectare carbon sink near the coal power plant.

While the groundbreaking ceremony was on going, anticoal power plant protesters were staging a rally outside.

Passionist priest Rey Carvyn Ondap led the placard-bearing anticoal protesters. They urged the project proponents to resort to renewable energy rather than use coal.

Ondap said the plant would pollute the environment, pose health hazard for local residents and exacerbate global warming.

The protesters, all parishioners of the Catholic Church here, also lambasted boxing icon and Representative Manny Pacquiao for supporting the project.

acquiao earlier signified his opposition to the project during the 2010 electoral campaign. But since the time he made a political alliance with Governor Dominguez he has become silent on environmental issues.

Pacquiao was invited to the groundbreaking rites, but did not show up.—**Aquiles Z. Zonio**

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