

# Indonesia to tap power of volcanoes to become geothermal energy leader, president says

Chris Blake, Associated Press, 4-26-10

JAKARTA, INDONESIA — Indonesia plans to tap the energy trapped beneath its volcanoes to become the world's largest user of geothermal power and reduce reliance on fuels blamed for global warming, the country's president said Monday.

Located on the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire, Indonesia has more active volcanoes than any other nation and is thought to hold more than 40 percent of the world's geothermal energy potential.

"Nations are striving to liberate themselves from overdependence on fossil fuels," President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono told those gathered for the opening of the World Geothermal Congress in Bali. "And to many countries, including Indonesia, a large part of the solution to that problem is the successful tapping of vast resources of geothermal energy."

The 2,500 delegates to the weeklong conference include Iceland's President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, whose country is a leader in geothermal energy and this month witnessed its enormous power when a volcanic eruption on the island nation sent up an ash cloud that closed airports across Europe.

Indonesia, home to some 265 volcanoes, is currently generating 1,200 megawatts of electricity from geothermal sources, just a percentage of the 28,000 megawatts of estimated potential, said Surya Darma, the chairman of the Indonesian Geothermal Association. Both the United States and the Philippines generate more.

Yudhoyono said that by 2025 he wants about 9,500 megawatts — about 5 percent of the nation's entire energy needs — to be provided through geothermal means.

Doing so will not be cheap or easy. Yudhoyono said Indonesia and other countries interested in tapping into their geothermal potential needed the help of development partners. Indonesia is working with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and countries such as Germany, France and the Netherlands on several projects worth \$8.6 billion that should add another 2,885 megawatts of geothermal generation.

The benefits of geothermal energy as a clean, renewable resource were clear, Yudhoyono said, and its increased use would lead to a reduction in the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere.

He dismissed concerns about the effects that tapping into geothermal fields located in unspoiled wilderness could have, saying it would have a "very minimal impact, if any on the environment."

Most of Indonesia's current electricity needs are met by coal, oil and natural gas.