

Asia-Pacific: region of the rising sun

Raghuram Natarajan, CEO of Blueleaf Energy, speaks with ICR about the growth of Asia-Pacific's renewable sector and how the company is positioned to accelerate the renewable energy transition for the region and its cement industry.

■ by *ICR Research, UK*

ICR: Energy transition is underway in the Asia-Pacific?

Raghuram Natarajan (RN): The global energy transition is gaining momentum as governments and businesses race against the clock to curb CO₂ emissions and limit the global temperature rise. Asia-Pacific accounts for over half of global energy consumption – the majority of which coming from fossil fuels. Supported by increasing populations and strong economic growth prospects, the demand for renewables in this region is set to increase dramatically.

ICR: How is Blueleaf Energy positioned to accelerate the energy transition for the region and the cement sector?

RN: Blueleaf Energy has a mission to deliver innovative and sustainable solutions through developing, financing, owning and operating renewable and storage energy assets that will enable a competitive and greener energy mix to build a sustainable future. We are a

portfolio company of Macquarie's Green Investment Group (GIG), operating on a standalone basis. Active in Asia-Pacific, Blueleaf Energy is committed to upholding the highest standards of safety, quality, ethics and integrity throughout its project lifecycle, helping corporates and utilities accelerate the energy transition to achieve carbon neutrality.

In recent years, we have been seeing an enormous increase in demand for renewable procurement, largely driven by ambitious decarbonisation targets set by governments and companies in the region. Only in 2021 Holcim Philippines signed a 20-year power purchase agreement (PPA) with Blueleaf Energy for a combined 29MWp solar power plant at two of its sites in Bulacan and La Union. Under the agreement terms, Blueleaf Energy will finance, build, operate and maintain the renewable energy facilities at the two sites, making Holcim the first cement maker in the Philippines to have on-site solar power plants.

ICR speaks with Raghuram Natarajan, CEO of Blueleaf Energy, about the renewables sector in Asia-Pacific



Our organisation operates with a long corporate history that comes with a strong technical and commercial background. Currently, we have a development pipeline of renewable energy projects in excess of 6GW, which includes wind, solar and energy storage. This comes on top of our credentials of having developed and built over 2GW of projects globally, of which more than 500MW in the Asia-Pacific region. We are pleased to continue to build our strong track record in delivering world-class clean energy solutions for large multinational companies across different sectors like Holcim, Bosch, Sify Technologies and Heineken. As the operator and owner of renewable energy assets, backed by strong shareholders with access to capital, we are well positioned to accelerate the energy transition with a new and innovative approach, breaking down cost barriers and at the same time applying value engineering to deploy safe, cost-effective and reliable clean energy solutions.



With Asia-Pacific accounting for over half of global energy consumption, the potential for renewable energy sources is considerable

ICR: Could you tell us more about the projects for Holcim's Bulacan and La Union plants?

RN: The partnership with Blueleaf Energy marks Holcim Philippines' transition to sustainable cleaner energy for cement production. Manufacturing cement is inherently energy-intensive, so the shift to renewable power enables Holcim Philippines to conserve natural resources and reduce CO₂ emissions.

The combined 29MWp solar energy facilities will be ground mounted on over 29ha of land (which is about the size of 40 soccer fields) and will be located near existing interconnection points. A total of more than 53,000 solar panels and over 100 inverters will be installed across both sites. They are estimated to have an annual generation of about 50GWh that could supply up to 15 per cent of the energy requirements for Holcim Philippines' manufacturing activities. This would translate to avoiding about 30,000t of CO₂ emissions – the equivalent of taking 10,000 petrol cars off the road in the first year of operation. The partnership is projected to significantly reduce the power costs and carbon footprint of Holcim Philippines by the time the solar energy facilities are scheduled to complete in 2024.

ICR: How do you plan to scale up Blueleaf Energy's renewable energy footprint in the Asia-Pacific region?

RN: Blueleaf Energy is developing a

portfolio of over 6GW of renewable energy in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to greenfield development, we are creating one of the largest renewable energy platforms in Asia-Pacific by scaling up renewable energy deployment through effective local partnerships including the Hinode Energy joint venture in Japan, a partnership with SunAsia in the Philippines and the acquisition of Vibrant Energy in India.

In 2021 Blueleaf Energy announced the creation of Hinode Energy, a specialised large-scale solar energy platform in Japan, through a joint venture with Spanish-Japanese solar firm, Univergy. Japan is one of the world's largest solar energy markets and offers significant growth opportunity. Hinode Energy brings together local insight and development experience with engineering expertise and financial capability to help drive Japan's green energy transition and to achieve its decarbonisation goals.

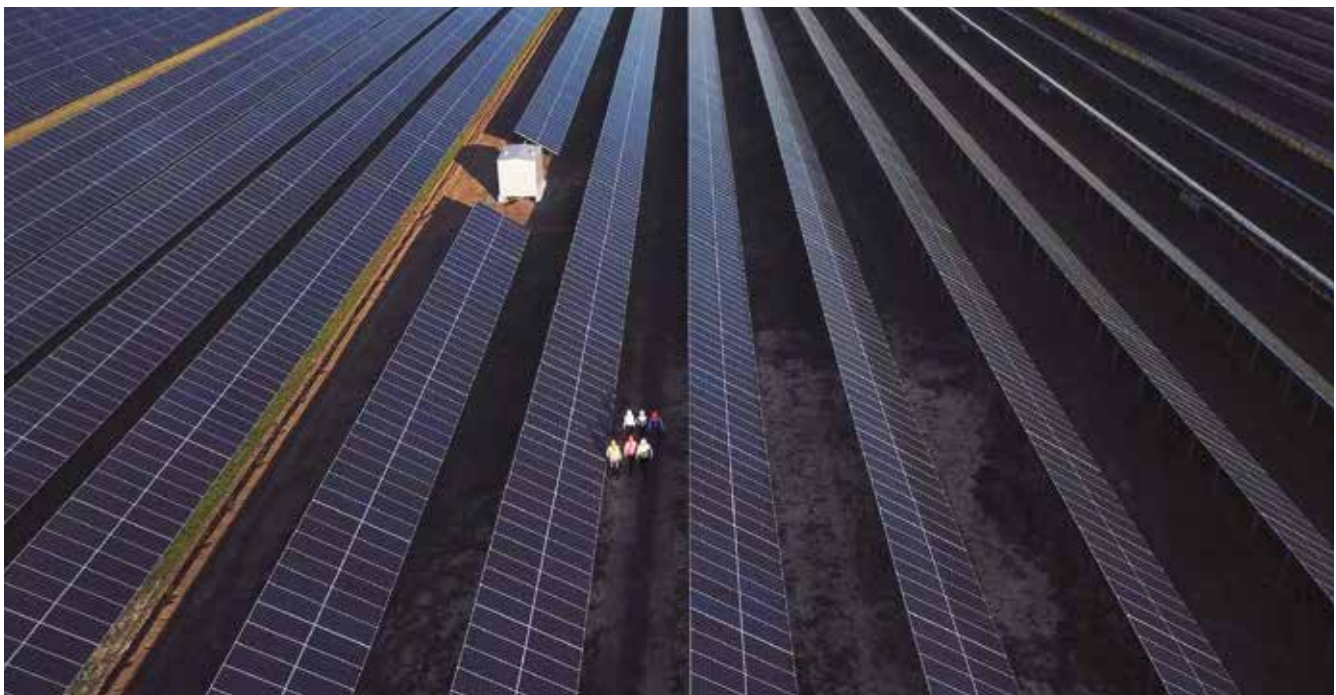
In the same year, Blueleaf Energy partnered with SunAsia to co-develop a solar portfolio of 1.25GW in the Philippines. The partnership coincides with the forecast growth of the Philippine's solar energy market. The country is increasingly focussed on renewable energy and targets to achieve a 35 per cent share of renewables in electricity generation by 2030, including an additional 15GW of solar energy to be installed. The partnership brings

together Blueleaf Energy's financial and deep in-house technical capabilities and SunAsia's local development experience, which is poised to significantly contribute to the achievement of Philippines' renewable energy goals.

In November 2020 Blueleaf Energy acquired a majority stake in Vibrant Energy from ATN International. By combining our global customer base and technical expertise with Vibrant Energy's deep local knowledge and strong project pipeline, this acquisition offers corporate customers an exciting opportunity to take control of their energy needs and achieve their decarbonisation objectives. With the acquisition of Vibrant Energy, we have secured a deeply-talented team and an impressive development pipeline in one of the most significant and exciting markets for the solar energy industry.

The transaction represents Blueleaf Energy's entry into the Indian market, which is now the third-largest solar market in the world. In 2021 the country's installed solar capacity saw a record jump of 10GW and it is targeting the installation of 100GW of solar capacity by 2022, and 300GW by 2030. India's fast-growing solar commercial and industrial market will be a major contributor to this.

We see India as a large market with huge growth potential and with the Vibrant Energy acquisition, we expect to be able to participate more meaningfully and ramp up quickly. ■



The Blueleaf Energy partnership with Holcim Philippines will see the installation of more than 53,000 solar panels and over 100 inverters at Holcim's Bulacan and La Union Cement sites to generate a total of 29MWp of solar energy