

Energy efficiency havana

By Luis Brizuela (IPS-Cuba)

HAVANA TIMES - With dated infrastructure and problems with fuel supplies, Cuba's electricity generation crisis has gotten a lot worse, which might speed up plans to increase the share of renewables.

Blackouts have become commonplace in recent weeks on the Caribbean island, further impacting and making families' lives harder.

Damages at many of the country's eight thermoelectric power plants and delays in maintenance works on 18 out of its 20 generating units are the reason for deficits in electricity generation, state government authorities.

Add to this, faults in distribution systems – cables, substations, transformers – due to a shortage of spare parts.

Cuba produces half of the fuel it burns at many of its power plants, but the other significant percentage depends entirely upon purchases abroad.

Forming part of bilateral agreements, the island should receive approximately 53,000 barrels of oil and derivatives every day from Venezuela, but this South American has sunk into its own crisis and deliveries are irregular, news channels report, while the local government hasn't disclosed any figures on the matter.

Meanwhile, a drop in liquefied petroleum gas supplies has been reported, which is used for electricity generation at power plants on the north-western coast, and this deficit can only be compensated by the exploration of new hydrocarbon wells, leaders in the sector have recognized.

"The electricity system's operating reserve is very low and is sometimes below what's needed for the country to cover consumers' energy demands, thus cuts in electricity are necessary and inevitable," the minister of Energy and Mines, Livan Arronte, pointed out during a TV appearance on September 14th.

The current crisis brings back flashbacks to many Cuban families about the long blackouts in the early 1990s, when the island lost its main fuel supplier when the Soviet Union collapsed.

In September 2019, there was another energy crisis when former US president Donald Trump's administration (2017-Jan 2021) decreed special measures to stop oil tankers reaching the island, as part of the series of measures used to reinforce the economic and financial embargo the US has imposed on Cuba since 1962.

"The US government has committed itself to threatening and blackmailing companies that supply fuel to



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Cuba, and this has resulted in a quantum leap in tightening down on and applying unconventional measures on the international transport of fuel, without any legal authority or moral high ground," the 2020 Annual Report on the Blockade (which people in Cuba call the US embargo) criticized.

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