

Indonesia hosts world's biggest geothermal energy forum

By Karishma Vaswani
BBC News, Jakarta

Page last updated at 21:58 GMT, Sunday, 25 April 2010 22:58 UK

Indonesia is hosting what is being called the world's biggest geothermal energy conference.

The congress in Bali is an attempt to look at how to better develop geothermal power as an environmentally friendly fuel for the future.

Geothermal power is energy extracted from the heat stored in the Earth, and environmentalists say it could be the key to using cleaner forms of fuel.

Representatives from 80 countries are attending the talks.



Indonesia wants to use the energy created by its volcanoes

Expensive endeavour

It is often dubbed volcano power but the correct scientific explanation for geothermal energy is power extracted from the heat stored in the Earth's core.

Indonesia has ambitious plans to tap geothermal power and in particular the energy created by its volcanoes.

The archipelago of more than 17,000 islands sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" - one of the most active regions in the world for volcanic activity. Indonesia does not have the resources to be able to provide a consistent supply of electricity to all of its population, so finding an alternative source of energy is critical for south-east Asia's largest economy as it rapidly expands.

This will be one of the major talking points at the world geothermal congress in Bali this week.

Scientists say that in theory the planet's geothermal power is enough to supply mankind's energy needs and could certainly help to solve Indonesia's fuel problems.

But the issue is cost. While environmentally friendly, the harnessing of geothermal power is also a very expensive endeavour.

Indonesia currently uses mostly coal as a source of power, which is cheap but is also considered harmful to the environment.

It is thought that a geothermal plant could cost about twice as much as a coal one and take many more years to build.

It is being reported that Indonesia is keen to raise more than \$1bn (£650m) in investment as a result of this conference so that it can develop geothermal energy as a source of power for its future.