

The Araneta Center: Powering the Awakening of a Giant



The timely supply of additional power and technical expertise are key components in Araneta Center's ongoing revitalization

Although Araneta Center has always been acknowledged as the pioneer in retail entertainment, by the end of the last century, the entry of newer shopping complexes throughout the metropolis eventually took the luster from this go-to shopping destination. Then in 2004, the Araneta Group regained the spotlight with the launch of the Gateway Mall. A five-level shopping complex with over 200 specialty shops and countless dining destinations, the

mall, according to Araneta Group President and CEO Jorge Araneta, "served as the main catalyst to the renaissance of the Araneta Center."

A priority in this revitalization was the renovation and expansion of its flagship Ali Mall, the first mall in the Philippines, constructed in 1976. The group made the decision to keep the mall open during the refurbishment, so strategic management of its power supply was necessary: power disruptions were carefully planned and kept to a minimum to ensure the smooth flow of operations within Araneta Center.

Consultations with Meralco showed that with the expanded and upgraded facilities Ali Mall would require an additional 1 megawatt of transformer capacity, not to mention an extensive revamp and rewiring of the mall's electrical system. Meralco was able to address these concerns by installing another transformer bank to complement the six already in place, and providing the technical know-how to properly and safely rehabilitate the mall's existing wiring installations.

With the successful completion of Ali Mall's renovation, the Araneta Group and Meralco are now looking forward to the next phase of redevelopment. Discussing his master plan, Araneta reveals the key components include a joint venture with Megaworld, Manhattan Garden City, an 18-tower residential development; the Gateway Tower, a 31-level office tower; South Parking Garage, a 1,500-unit eight-level state of the art parking facility; the ongoing renovation of Smart Araneta Coliseum; the construction of a performing arts theater; and the development of Novotel Hotel. Scheduled for completion next year, the Araneta Group counts Accor, a French hotel chain with over 4,000 hotels round the globe, as its partner for this venture.

In discussing the future, Araneta revisits the past, and the partnerships built that brought it to where it is at present. "The relationship of Meralco and the Araneta Center goes back a long time. From a cogon field where the coliseum was built in 1960 to the Araneta Center today, we have always been a major customer and likewise a contributor to Meralco's growth... With the advent of open access, we consider MPower, Meralco's retail energy provider, as a long-term partner for our future energy requirements."