

Bilawal to inaugurate Thar coal power plant today

ISLAMKOT: All is set for the formal inauguration of first ever Thar coal fired power generation plant by Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, here on Wednesday (today).

The PPP Chairman will be accompanied by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, his cabinet colleagues, senior government officials and diplomats of various countries including that of China. The inauguration will be performed in Islamkot where both the coal mines of Thar block-II and the first ever power plant are situated. The federal government is likely to be represented by Federal Power Minister Umer Ayub Khan. The power plant has 660 MW power generation capacity consisting of two power generation units of 330 MWs capacity each. It is part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor project and China actively extended financial, technical, and manpower support for the project

Briefing the newsmen on Tuesday, Project Manager of Power Plant Faisal Shafiq said one of the power generation units has been synchronized with the national grid while the synchronization of the second unit would commence from Wednesday. He said the formal commercial operation would commence by June when its full capacity would be available to the national grid. Shafiq said it took around 10 years since the Thar coal energy project was conceived and the Sindh government entered into partnership with Engro under the Public Private Partnership regime. He said all the environmental concerns were allayed as it meets the World Bank and International Finance Corporation standards. Shafiq said the project would consume 12,000 tonnes coal per day from Thar block-II at full capacity. He said around 4,000-strong labour force was employed for construction of power plant and around 2,500 labourers belong to Thar. He said up to 70 engineers working for the coal power project also belong to Thar. He said the construction of the power plant was completed in almost 36 months' time.

Earlier, Project Manager of Thar Block-II coal mine Naeem Pasha told the newsmen that the mining operation in Thar block-II had commenced in 2016 and the open-pit mining was conducted up to 160 metres. He said more coal extraction from block-II would be used in the later years to generate to 5,000 MWs by the year 2024. He said so far the block-II has achieved the capacity of 3.8 tonnes per annum and it would be increased to 27 tonnes per annum in next five years. He said this is just one per cent of the massive Thar coal reserves of 175 billion tonnes and would be enough to generate electricity for next 50 years. Naseer Memon, General Manager CSR of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company, told newsmen that Thar coal power project has given direct and indirect employment to up to 6,000 Thari people.

Our Correspondent