

330MW unit of Thar power station begins trial run

MITHI: Pakistan's first power station to burn lignite coal from Thar for electricity generation began its trial run on Tuesday under a public-private partnership, adding 330 megawatts to the national grid in the initial phase.

The first unit of 330MW of the combined 660MW power plant, located in Thar Block II, was connected to the power grid on Monday and the second unit will be connected in April, while commercial operations are expected to start in June, according to the Engro Powergen Thar Private Ltd (EPTL) chief executive officer.

"We are running the plant on 100 per cent local coal, thus generating cheap and abundant power in the country," said EPTL chief executive Ahsan Zafar Syed.

The EPTL, which tested and energised the first unit of the power station, is part of the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that involves building new infrastructure to help turn Pakistan into a major overland route linking China to the wider region.

Another unit will be connected to power grid next month; commercial operations to start in June

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Engro Corporation president Gias Khan, Engro Energy Limited chief executive officer Ahsan Zafar Syed and senior officials of EEL and China Machinery Engineering Corporation (the EPC contractor of the project), provincial Energy Minister Imitaz Shaikh, Adviser to the CM on Information Murtaza Wahab and Minister for Excise Mukesh Kumar Chawla witnessed the successful synchronisation of the first unit of the power station in Thar Coal Block II.

"We will produce 4,000MWs from Thar Coal Block II alone, while Thar has potential to develop 100 more blocks," said CM Shah while talking to journalists on the occasion.

He said the public-private partnership model of Engro Corporation and the Sindh government yielded fruit, with the Thar dream being finally realized.

Mr Shah said that Thar coal belonged to the people of Tharparkar and the area would change the destiny of Pakistan. The first milestone on this way had been achieved, he added.

It is estimated that the project on completion will help the country bring average foreign exchange savings of up to 1.6 billion dollars annually.

The 660MW power plant will use circulating fluidized bed technology to burn coal. With the start of commercial operations, the plant will evacuate 660MW through a 282-km-long 500kV double circuit quad-bundle transmission line from EPTL plant to Matiari district in Sindh.

Engro Corporation President Ghias Khan said: “The first sync of the power plant on Thar coal is truly a momentous occasion for entire Pakistan.” He thanked the Sindh government as well as the federal government for their support in helping his company to deliver on commitments of the Thar coal projects.

Engro Energy and EPTL chief executive officer acknowledged the efforts of partners and sponsors in the project and said: “I am confident that together with all our partners, Engro will forge ahead with synchronization of the second unit of the 660MW power plant in April 2019 and Insha-Allah will achieve the target of commercial operations date of both the mining and the power project, as per our commitment, in June 2019.”

Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company’s CEO Syed Abul Fazal Rizvi said: “I congratulate the EPTL management on successful energisation of the first unit of the plant. The SECMC has already commenced the delivery of coal to the EPTL plant and we will now further optimize the mine to deliver on our promise of providing economical, indigenous energy to Pakistan.”

Hanif Samoon