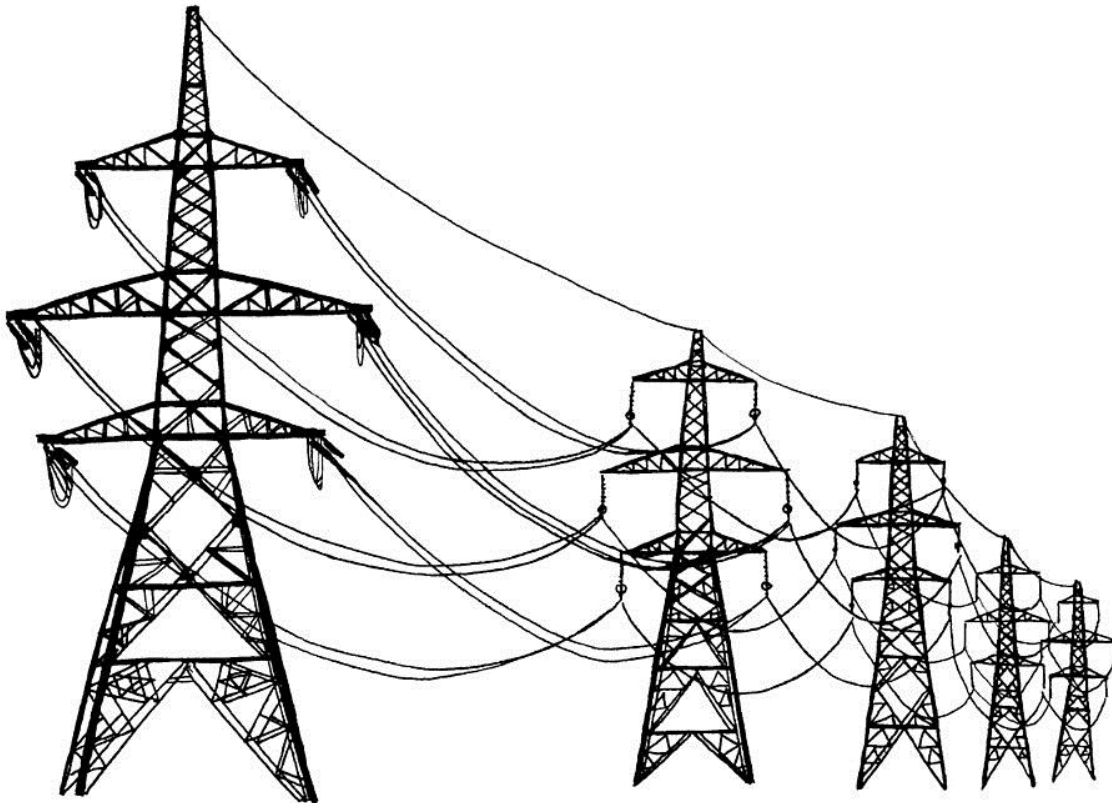

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K-Electric to set up 700MW power plant

K-Electric has planned to set up a 700MW power project with the assistance of a Chinese engineering firm, calling it a milestone project in the economic cooperation between China and Pakistan.

The project, it said, would directly benefit the country's economic hub and "meet the growing power demand of Karachi and its adjoining areas".

In a statement issued here on Monday, K-Electric announced that it had recently signed an agreement with China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) to establish a state-of-the-art 700MW IPP-based power project at Port Qasim. The project was formally announced at the Pakistan Trade and Investment Forum held alongside the second Belt and Road Forum in Beijing, the statement said.

It said the project agreement and contracts were signed by K-Electric chief executive officer Moonis Alvi and CMEC chairman Zhang Chun in the presence of Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industry Abdul Razak Dawood.

"I am sure that this is just one of a series of joint endeavours in the future that will translate into a win-win for shared prosperity in the region and beyond," the statement quoted Mr Dawood as saying. "Stable electricity supply infrastructure is critical for the country's sustainable progress, trade and industries and I urge all stakeholders to work together for its early completion to maximise the benefits to Karachi and Pakistan."

The statement said the project was being developed under an IPP mode structure, with K-Electric as the single off-taker. KE holds equity share in this IPP, whereas CMEC is both an equity partner and EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) contractor. The power project already has an approved tariff from the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority, whereas the land for the project has been acquired in the Port Qasim area.

Sharing his thoughts after signing the agreement, the CMEC chairman described Pakistan as a land of opportunities with tremendous economic potential. "We are delighted to be a part of this landmark occasion today and are confident about the role of this power plant in addressing Karachi's power needs and look forward to increased economic cooperation between China and Pakistan in future as well," Mr Zhang said.

The K-Electric CEO said the current project was one more in a series of investments by KE to further strengthen the city's power infrastructure and brought the power utility yet another step closer to the company's long-term commitment to enabling Karachi to fulfil its economic potential.

"KE has invested more than \$2.1 billion in infrastructure upgrades across the energy value chain over the last nine years and plans to invest \$3bn over the next few years. We are committed to increasing power generation and upgrading Karachi's transmission and distribution network," Mr Alvi said.

The statement said the construction of the plant was expected to commence in the first quarter of the next fiscal year. Once the project came online, it would not only help meet the growing power demand of Karachi and its adjoining areas but also allow KE to diversify its fuel mix, it added.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 01, 30/04/2019)

Amid chronic power crisis, Sindh villages look to the sun

Octagenarian Ghulam Farid Jafferani thought he and his village were destined to spend their days in the blistering heat and nights in pitch black darkness. Time and again, residents of his village of Deh Je Wandh, some 78km west of Larkana, implored their elected representatives to electrify the hamlet, but to no avail.

"In my 80 years of life, no one ever paid heed to our calls for electricity," said Jafferani. "We were forced to cool ourselves with traditional hand fans come summer every year. Until now that is."

Deh Je Wandh is one of many villages of Sindh that, driven by years of official neglect, have turned to solar power to meet their electricity needs. During the day, glimmering panels that dot the landscape of small towns and villages in the province can be seen from far away. At night, twinkling lights powered by batteries charged over the day make them appear like bustling urban areas or industrial hubs.

"Solar panels have changed our life so much for the better," a beaming Jafferani told The Express Tribune. "We pray with all our hearts for whoever invented this technology," he said.

As much as 90 per cent of Deh Je Wandh and other adjoining villages are now powered by solar energy, a visit to the area revealed. The residents, when interviewed, revealed that they have invested in the technology out of their own pocket.



"I sold my goat to purchase a solar panel for Rs5,500 and a battery for Rs9,000. A fan compatible with solar power cost me another Rs4,500," said Ali Bux Totani of the

neighbouring Thorhi Bijar village. "The battery, after being charged by the panel, powers a fan and two bulbs for 24 hours, which is sufficient for my family of four," he added. "There is no bill at the end and I do not have to suffer hours-long power breakdowns."

Connectivity issues

Both Deh Je Wandh and Thorhi Bijar are located in Kamber Tehsil, where power lines were first laid down under the government of Pakistan Peoples Party founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the 1970s. Even so, up till now, only 50 of the tehsil's 300 households have electricity meters installed and only half of them manage to pay their power bill on time. Roughly the same picture holds true for the more than three dozen surrounding villages that have not seen regular supply of electricity for the last 30 years.

"We used to bear 15 to 18 hours of load shedding every day," said local landlord Abdul Malik. "And that was on the days we had electricity at all. Often times, we had to live without it for days."

"Now, virtually entire villages have switched to solar power," Malik said. "I purchased two panels for Rs11,600 and a medium-sized battery for Rs13,800. The battery charger, cabling and converter cost me Rs7,000. I can run four fans and four bulbs using this setup. I will be getting two more panels to power a fridge," he added.

Demand and supply

"Six years ago, I sold a single solar panel for Rs14,000," said Ishaq Soomro, a supplier of solar energy equipment in Kamber tehsil. "Now, the huge demand for solar energy and competition to meet it means a panel costs a mere Rs5,500," he told The Express Tribune.

According to Soomro, solar energy is being relied on not just for fans and lights, but heavy power consuming appliances like air conditioners as well. "You need six solar panels to run air conditioners, which can be installed for Rs180,000," he said.



"Almost everyone here now relies on solar energy because the local power utility company has failed them," Soomro added. "Even basic health centres run by PPHI (People's Primary Healthcare Initiative) and government schools in our district are switching to it."

Beyond Larkana, villages and towns in Kamber Shahdadt, Dadu, Sanghar, Jamshoro, Kashmore, Sukkur, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Khairpur, Thatta and Badin districts are also increasingly opting for solar energy.

But it is not only rural areas that are turning to solar power. Many hospitals, schools and universities are moving towards the system – case in point being the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Sukkur. The university has not only managed to fulfil its power needs with solar energy systems but has inked an agreement with the Sukkur Electric Power Company to provide it with surplus electricity. Like IBA Sukkur, the 133-bed Jacobabad Institute of Medical Sciences (JIMS) is also completely reliant on solar power.

Taking the credit

Talking to The Express Tribune, Sindh Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh said these success stories were not possible without the provincial government's assistance. "Our government has brought about a revolution by supporting and funding the move of various organisations, institutions and departments towards solar power," he said.



"We paid PPHI to convert all basic health centres to solar energy and allocated Rs113 million to subsidise solar-powered tube wells and water pumps in the current fiscal year. We are also beginning to switch government schools in

rural areas to solar power," he added.

(By Hafeez Tunio The Express Tribune, 04, 20/05/2019)

Karachiites to pay more for electricity under revised tariff

Electricity tariff for the K-Electric has been revised upward and will be applicable from the next billing cycle, it emerged on Tuesday.

Sources in the power utility told Dawn that residential customers consuming between 301 and 400 units would be charged Rs16 per unit and those consuming more than 400 units would be paying Rs18 per unit under the new power tariff regime.

A KE spokesperson said that the revised tariff was notified by the minister of energy on May 22.

The revision was in line with the consumer-end tariff charged under the uniform tariff policy applicable across Pakistan, he said, adding that no increase had been made in the rates for residential consumers having consumption up to 300 units.

"As per the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's (Nepra) tariff terms and conditions notified in the SROs dated May 22, 2019, issued by the Ministry of Energy (Power Division), electricity tariff for K-Electric consumers has been revised upward and will be applicable from the next billing cycle," the spokesperson said.

Under the new tariff regime, he said, certain terms and conditions have been revised including the implementation of time of use (ToU) billing where eligible consumers will be charged based on their consumption during peak and off-peak hours.

"Moreover, bank charges and meter rent will no longer be charged to customers," he added.

The spokesperson said that a new "A3 General Services" tariff category had been introduced and criteria for lifeline consumers and industrial consumers having tariff category B1 and B2 had been revised.

"In addition, Rs3 per unit relief provided to industries under the industrial support package has now been merged into consumer-end tariff and this adjustment will no longer be shown separately in electricity bills," he said.
(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 29/05/2019)

Lights out!: Citizens forced to brave power cuts in sweltering heat in Karachi

The scorching sun and still, humid air have reigned over Karachi in recent days, with no respite from sea winds. Karachiites are left to reckon with the recent heat spell with the K-Electric only adding to their woes. The power utility company has been carrying out unscheduled, unannounced load shedding in many areas of the city. Localities previously exempt from load shedding due to high recovery of utility bills are not spared either this summer.

Areas like Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Defence View, parts of Saddar, Clifton, PECHS, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Gulistan-e-Jauhar, Bahadrabad, Malir, Nazimabad, which hadn't experienced frequent load shedding in the past three years, have now been forced to deal with two to three hour-long load shedding daily. Naturally, this has caused resentment among citizens.

"It is as if we are back to five years ago, when the power played hide-and-seek in our houses," said Muhammad Hussain while speaking to *The Express Tribune*. Hussain, a resident of Defence View, said that the temperature has soared in the city in the past two years. "The city sizzled but a situation like this didn't surface despite technical faults. This seems to be a gift from Naya Pakistan," he added.

Riazuddin, another resident of the area, pointed out that according to KE's policy, areas with 'honest consumers' – those who pay their dues on time and do not engage in electricity theft – would be exempt from load shedding. The middle-aged man was protesting outside the local consumer office armed with a sheaf of paid electricity bills. "We pay our bill on time. What is the purpose behind power outage at 7am?" asked Riazuddin. He complained that there was no announced schedule for load shedding. Citizens are left in the dark literally and figuratively as, "the electricity can go out at any time". Referring to the KE helpline, Riazuddin said that lodging complaints at 118 or 02199000 take up a lot of time and more often than not, the call goes unattended.

Was there ever respite?

Most of the city's areas have never been relieved of power outages. For many years now, they have faced five to six hour-long load shedding spells, even in the winter season.

"We are forced to bear with load shedding thrice a day and each power outage lasts at least two hours," said Azmat Shah, a resident of Bazarta Line. "I have a gas generator which I run every time the power goes out. I pay Rs2,500 to Rs3,000 for gas each month on top of my electricity bill," he lamented. "We have now heard that the PTI [Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf] government is now increasing domestic gas by 200 per cent," said Azmat, referring to the recent suggestion of increase in petroleum tariffs by the federal power division. "This means that we will have to pay more than double the amount in utility bills," he lamented.

It isn't just domestic consumers who are miserable because of power outages. This pattern has also affected owners of small and medium-scale enterprises. Ali Raza, who owns a lathe machine workshop in Mehmoodabad claimed the recent surge in power breakdowns has caused his business to suffer immensely. "I have had to delay many orders of cutting, knurling and drilling of spare parts. There is no option but to sit idle waiting for the power to return," he said. Raza's area experiences two-hour long power outages frequently in the day. "This definitely affects our business".

Water crisis

In recent days, areas such as Malir, Ibrahim Hyderi, Gadap, New Karachi and Keamari, also experienced severe water shortage following long periods of load shedding. Reports surfaced of residents coming out on the streets in protest.

"When there is no light, how can we get water?" asked Kamal Shah, while leading the protest in Ibrahim Hyderi. "We are made to suffer six to eight-hour long load shedding especially in the summer," he claimed.

Pointing fingers

Hafiz Naeemur Rehman of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Karachi Chapter, criticised unannounced load shedding in various areas. "KE is rubbing salt in the wounds of citizens already suffering from inflation," he said. "Before it [KE] was privatised, the federal government would give around Rs2 billion in annual subsidies to KESC [as it was known back then]," he said. Now, Rehman claims, KE receives around Rs75b in subsidies from the government. "We ask Prime Minister Imran Khan why his government continues to give such huge subsidies to a private power utility company which has failed to deliver?"

According to Rehman, instead of relying on power producing companies, the KE must generate its own electricity to meet the shortfall. He lashed out at the power utility company for generating inflated bills of billions of rupees and looting innocent citizens. “The practice of inflated bills still continues, I request the National Accountability Bureau to take action against it,” he remarked.

Despite repeated attempts, the KE spokesperson gave no definitive comment on the prevailing situation. “We have sent the official statement on the current situation to high-ups for approval and will email it to you soon,” said a senior official of the power utility company. However, their official statement was not released till the filing of this story.
(By Hafeez Tunio The Express Tribune, 04, 22/06/2019)

Karachi Electric says it can't meet city's power demand. Numbers suggest otherwise

Karachi has been in the midst of another electricity crisis for almost a fortnight with power outages reported in localities across the metropolis. This isn't the first time that such long hours of 'load management' have been carried out in the city when it is experiencing increased temperature to the extent where 'heat wave advisories' are issued by the provincial government.

The power utility that lights up the city of over 20 million, the K-Electric, finds excuse in that same temperature rise, saying it results in increased demand. While they fail to maintain how much is this 'increase in demand' and what is the shortfall, they continue to carry out 'scheduled power outages' that are focused in areas that, according to the KE, are low-to-high loss.

The losses

This means that there is a high percentage of electricity loss – this is primarily due to poor infrastructure but also collusion of KE's lower-tier employees with the consumers resulting in doctoring of electricity meters.

Another reason for loss is electricity theft, which is done through the kunda system. The third reason is the delay in recovery of dues from consumers. This results in areas marked for poor recovery rates, and they are subjected to increased 'load management' and scheduled power outages.

However, the outages have now reached areas that have high recovery rates, including those that crossed the threshold of 90% recovery where no power outages are supposed to take place barring emergencies.

The numbers

According to most estimates, Karachi's power demand is between 2,700 to 2,900 megawatt during the summer.

During informal conversations, KE officials said that except for two to three days, particularly during the heat wave, the demand jumped to over 3,300 MW.

The website of the privately-owned power utility says that it has its own generation units 'with installed capacity of 2,267 megawatts' and gets over 1,162 MW from external power producers – or IPPs as they are known, including 650 MW from the national grid, which means Wapda. This makes a total capacity of 3,479 MW.

According to these numbers, the KE has the infrastructure to power up the city. Moreover, the electricity that it gets from the national grid is subsidised, while the gas they get from the public utility, the Sui Southern Gas Company, is provided to the company on priority basis. It has also benefitted from debt write offs in the past.

The concessions that the company gets, despite its privatisation, has irked not just policy makers but consumers as well. On top of it, the KE not only fails to cater to the city's power needs, it says that it will continue to carry out scheduled outages in high-loss areas.

The outages

While there are now three one-hour-long outages in high-recovery areas, high-loss areas experience three or even four phases of outages of 1.5 to 2 hours each.

During times of extreme temperatures, when demand is likely to be at the apex, 12-hour long outages were reported from a variety of districts.

Besides, in case a transformer trips or a major cable is damaged – a much likelier scenario in areas with congested lanes and low-hanging wires often tangled up in branches – there could be another few hours depending on how quickly the locals can get a response from the power utility.

Meanwhile, being a privately-owned business, it has no compunction in disregarding public welfare, even during heat waves, by adhering to its policy of carrying out outages in low-recovery, high-loss areas.

One of the understandings of allowing the KE to be privatised was that the investors would improve its transmission and distribution system, which was crippling the utility due to the excessive losses. Despite claims of investing millions of dollars to improve the distribution system, every year in the summer, the frequency of breakdowns is on the rise.

Over a thousand instances of minor faults – with major ramifications for households – are reported every day.

(By Adil Jawad The Express Tribune, 05, 25/06/2019)