

Zimbabwe power utility in \$5bn expansion drive

HARARE: Zimbabwe's power utility has budgeted \$5bn for projects to scale up electricity generation, as the country battles a crippling deficit, an executive said.



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"We are looking at around \$5bn for the various projects and more than 3,500-megawatts," Noah Gwariro, managing director of Zimbabwe Power Company told journalists late Thursday, 16 April 2015.

"That's over a period of five to six years."

Projects lined up included the \$1.5bn joint project with China to build units at the Hwang thermal power station, a \$533m expansion at Kariba hydropower station and solar, gas or diesel generators in the eastern border town of Mature.

"We want to put up a plant at Mature which will be able to burn diesel or will be fired from gas," said Gwariro, adding that gas was expected to come from neighbouring Mozambique.

He said eight companies had submitted bids for the projects.

Zimbabwe is battling to supply enough electricity to users with the utility producing an average of 1,200-megawatts against peak demand of 2,200-megawatts.

Blackouts of up to eight hours a day are a common occurrence in many parts of the country.

Zimbabwe is recovering from an economic slump that lasted over a decade and the utility has been battling to raise money for the maintenance of its ageing power stations.

"Our operations require money to do maintenance, we require money to pay for consumables, coal, water, so what it means is that we are not up to date with the maintenance of our plants," he said.

"We don't have enough spares to keep plants going and we also have a challenge in paying our suppliers, which then puts a strain on them to supply us with coal and other spares."

He said the company, which also imports electricity from South Africa's Eskom, owes \$99m to suppliers.

Source: AFP

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