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King Inaugurates First Independent Power Plant

By Mohammad Ghazal



His Majesty King Abdullah tours Amman East Power Project on Monday

AMMAN - His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday officially inaugurated the \$300 million Amman East Power Project, which officials said will help increase Jordan's electricity generation capacity by approximately 15 per cent.

The 370-megawatt (MW) combined cycle power plant, located 30 kilometers east of Amman, was built by AES Jordan PSC, a company owned by a consortium of AES Oasis Ltd. and Mitsui and Co. Ltd., which also owns and operates the plant.

The King also toured the plant and was briefed on its generation phases.

"The plant will help meet the surging demand on electricity in the Kingdom," Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Khaldoun Qteishat told reporters.

According to the minister, demand on electricity in Jordan increases by about 7.4 per cent annually.

The facility, Jordan's first independent power plant, runs on the natural gas provided by the pan-Arab gas pipeline from Egypt. The plant will be capable of switching to diesel fuel oil if needed, a statement by the company said, noting that the plant is an environment-friendly plant.

The strategic 270-kilometre gas pipeline between Jordan and Egypt was inaugurated by King Abdullah and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in July 2003. The line is the first phase of an inter-regional project that costs more than \$1 billion.

According to the ministry, the Kingdom relies on natural gas for 80 per cent of its energy needs. In remarks at the inauguration ceremony, Qteishat said the project is an important demonstration of the success of the country's energy strategy.

The Kingdom currently imports some 96 per cent of its energy needs, accounting for over one-fifth of its gross domestic product.

The minister said the financial closure for another independent plant, Al Qatraneh, is imminent, adding that the facility will generate about 370MW.

In their remarks at the ceremony, representatives of the consortium and implementing companies pointed out the benefits of the project, which, in the construction phase, hired 1,000 Jordanians and created about 40 direct jobs for local residents.

They also highlighted the potential of the project to help increase the Kingdom's power generation and enable it to eventually export electricity.

The Amman East Power Project will deliver electricity to the National Electric Power Company through a 25-year power purchase agreement.