

Zimbabwe's new 300MW coal-fired plant starts feeding into grid

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Zimbabwe's new 300MW coal-fired power generating unit started feeding electricity into the national grid late on Monday, 20 March, the state power utility said, as it moves to ease extended outages that have impacted businesses and households.



Hwange Power station. Source: Reuters/Philimon Bulawayo

The southern African country is expanding its 920MW Hwange thermal power station by adding two 300MW units at a cost of \$1.4bn, with 85% of the funding coming from China.

The first of the two units built by Chinas Sinohydro was successfully synchronised into the national grid late Monday, the Zimbabwe Power Company (ZPC) said.

"Power will be progressively fed into the grid until it reaches 300MW," ZPC said in a statement.



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Thermal power generation

The ZPC has said it expects the second 300MW thermal unit to start generating power in October, bringing new generation capacity to 600MW.

Zimbabwe is currently generating less than half of its 1,700MW demand as the old thermal units at Hwange, commissioned between 1983 and 1987, frequently break down and are performing below capacity.

Low water levels due to inadequate rains have seen generation from the country's other major plant, the 1,050MW Kariba South hydro station, being capped at a third of its capacity.

In December, the government announced incentives to help accelerate 1,000MW solar projects worth \$1bn planned by independent power producers, seeking to ramp up renewable power generation amid a funding freeze on coal-fired power projects as the world shifts away from the polluting fossil fuel.

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