

Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and former President Asif Ali Zardari jointly performed ground-breaking of the US 1.6 billion dollar Thar Coal Mining & Power Project of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) on Friday, 31st January, 2014 at Thar Coalfield Block-II near Islamkot.

The project of Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company will initially provide 660 MW of power for Pakistan's energy starved industrial units. It will complete in 2017 and help spur economic development and bring energy security to the country. The two leaders of PMLN and PPP performed the ground-breaking of the project that will be carried out by Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) - a joint venture between Government of Sindh and Engro Corp.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in his address said the launch of the project along with Asif Ali Zardari, had sent a message across that the political leadership should be united when it comes to the development of the country. He said this political trend must be set in Pakistan now and the leaders need to think about the country first regardless of their differences. He thanked former President Asif Zardari for inviting him to the ground-breaking of the Thar Coal project and said it was a matter of satisfaction that "we all are together and have the same priorities. Anyone who believes in the development of Pakistan, would be pleased that the country's political leadership is together on this national event." Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif termed the Thar Coal project a big national development project and suggested that the coal for all projects in Gaddani should be supplied from Thar. He said the Thar Coal project would eventually produce 6600 MW of power. He said the project will usher in an era of prosperity and development for the people of Tharparkar. He also seconded the suggestion of former President Asif Ali Zardari for setting up an industrial park in Thar that would generate employment for the people. He said the Federal Government will contribute in its development. "The progress of any province is the prosperity of entire Pakistan," he added.

Former President Asif Ali Zardari said the day's event would convey a message to the next generations of the country that the politicians need to sit together to work for the development of the country. He said the project, initiated by Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and later during his government, has finally seen the light of the day. He was also appreciative of the people of Thar who supported his party.

Chief Minister Sindh Qaim Ali Shah said the project would bring about a big change in the lives of the people of Tharparkar, Sindh and the entire country. He termed the coal as gold for Pakistan and said the electricity generated would be used to help run the industrial units of the country and generate employment.

Earlier, Chief Executive Officer Engro Shamsuddin Ahmed Shaikh while briefing the Prime Minister said that Engro had started a joint venture in power sector with Sindh Government by acquiring Block-II of Thar Coal area, comprising 100 square kilometer. In Block-II, he said the availability of two billion tonnes coal has been estimated and in the first phase, the process of coal mining and establishment of power project, will be completed with 1.6 billion dollars in three and half years. Initially, the project will

generate 660 Megawatts electricity, however, the completion of other phases will help in generating 5,000 megawatts electricity, he said.

Secretary Energy Government of Sindh Agha Wasif briefed the Prime Minister about the under-construction Thar Airport. He informed that 80 percent work of the airport had been completed and by June 2014, the project will be completed at a cost of Rs. 972 million. He said the Sindh Government had also launched a project of Environmental and Social Studies including Re-settlement Framework and land use plan for Thar Coal field with approved cost of Rs. 230 million. The objectives of launching the project was to carry out social and environmental studies, air quality assessment, designing of re-settlement with policy framework and land use plan, he added. Agha Wasif also briefed the Prime Minister about preparation of water master plan of Thar Coalfield including hydrogeological water supply and waste water management studies. The Prime Minister was also briefed about the improvement of road network project launched in two phases by the provincial government. He was also briefed about the construction of 50 cusecs drainage, waste water and effluent channel from mining of Thar Coalfield Unit-2, launched by the provincial government with approved cost of Rs. 3672 million. Agha Wasif also informed the Prime Minister about installation of Reverse Osmosis (Water Desalination) plants in Tharparkar and Umerkot districts, adding that 54 such plants had so far been completed and remaining 39 were in progress. He also informed the Prime Minister about Water Carrier from Nabisar to Islamkot Thar Coalfield Project, adding that Rs. 262.890 million have so far been spent on the project which will be completed by June 2015.

Chief Minister Balochistan Abdul Malik Baloch, Acting Governor Sindh Agha Siraj Durrani, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, Federal Information Minister Pervaiz Rasheed, Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, State Minister for Water and Power Abid Sher Ali, Senior Sindh Education Minister Nisar Khohro, Sindh Information Minister Sharjill Nam Memon, Sindh Minister for Zakat and Ushr Doust Ali Rahimo and Chairman Engro Pakistan Hussain Daud were present.

The project in Block-II of Tharparkar District is spread over an area of 79.6 square kilometres. According to a feasibility study, the project is commercially viable and has no significant environmental threats and social implications. In the Phase I, the project will develop coal mining and power project with a capacity of 3.8 million tonnes per annum and 660 MW. Subsequently, the mine will be expanded to a coal capacity of 6.5 million tonnes per annum to support a 1300 MW power plant. In Phase II, it is planned to expand mining project to 13.5 million tonnes and 19.5 million tonnes, with a power generation capacity of 2400 MW and 3600 MW. The Thar coal field has an estimated lignite reserves of 175 billion tonnes, equivalent to total oil reserves of Saudi Arabia and Iran combined and can be used to produce 100,000 MW for 300 years.