

[Thar coal is a game changer, says PM Shehbaz](#)



MITHI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Monday that cheaper energy production from Thar coalfields would be a game changer for national development.

Speaking at the inauguration of the commercial operations of the second phase of coal mining by Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC), the prime minister said the Thar coal project would help the government save up to \$6 billion annually in terms of reduced energy imports, which already crossed the \$24bn mark. He said the project was high on the government's agenda as coal reduced the cost of power generation.

The prime minister also inaugurated a 330-megawatt power plant of Thar Energy Ltd (TEL) and also inspected the construction site of SECMC Mine Phase II near Islamkot town of Tharparkar district.

Inaugurates 2nd phase of mining operations, 330MW power plant

PM Shehbaz said that ignoring the country's indigenous coal reserves was a huge mistake and announced that he'd convene a meeting of stakeholders on Thar coal mines next week to discuss the way forward.

He said the federal government, in collaboration with the Sindh government, would chalk out a policy framework on the Thar coal project to connect it with the rest of the coal-powered plants in the country, producing 4,000MW of electricity.

The coal-powered plants, he said would provide feasible electricity production at the rate of Rs 10 per unit, helping save valuable foreign exchange. On March 2023, he said, the project would be connected through a freight rail track for the transportation of coal to other parts of the country.

Speaking to *Dawn*, Sindh Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh said the mining project will soon enter the third phase. The increased mining will supply fuel to the 660MW power plant of the Lucky Group, he said.

Speaking on the occasion, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said Thar had emerged as model of development through public-private partnership. He said the project had contributed to the provision of jobs to local people and improved their lives.

He said under the public-private partnership model, the barren desert of Thar was now witnessing irrigation cropping and fish breeding with the use of water from the coalmines in the Gorano area.

He said the collaborative project should be replicated in other parts of the country and expressed confidence that development plans would materialise under PM Shehbaz's government at a swift pace.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said Sindh was the energy basket of Pakistan as it offered immense energy resources, including solar and wind.