

Zimbabwe, China sign electricity deal

HARARE, ZIMBABWE: Zimbabwe has signed a US\$400m deal with China's state-owned SinoHydro to increase electricity production and ease daily blackouts.

The deal will see a 400MW upgrade for the Kariba Hydro power station on the Zambezi river, providing 18% more electricity to meet peak demand.

"We know that this project is badly needed to improve the lives of Zimbabwe's people," said Yuzhi Wang, a SinoHydro official. Zimbabwe's current production shortfall leaves residents without power for up to 12 hours a day.

The country needs about 2,200MW at peak consumption, but generates just under 1,300MW because of its old equipment and a lack of investment in maintenance or upgrades.

"Zimbabwe and indeed the whole southern African region faces a critical power shortage and will continue to do so for at least the next few years," said Victor Gapare, chairman of the state-backed Zimbabwe Power Company.

Plans are also underway to revamp the Hwange thermal power station in the west of the country.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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