

Zimbabwe aims to double power output by 2025 to meet mining demand

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Zimbabwe's state power utility ZESA aims to more than double national grid capacity by 2025 to respond to increased demand from the mining sector, its chief executive said on Thursday, 1 June.



Centragrid power plant in Nyabira, Zimbabwe. 2020. Source: Reuters/Philimon Bulawayo

The country currently has a generating capacity of 2,000 megawatts (MW) but is only producing 1,400MW due to regular breakdowns at its thermal power stations and water shortages at its main hydro plant.

The southern African country is reeling from power cuts of up to 12 hours daily.

It expects to add 2,300MW to the grid by 2025, said ZESA chief executive Howard Choga.

"We expect that by 2025, we would have added 2,300MW to the grid. I must say over 80% of the 2,300MW is demand from miners," Choga told a mining conference in Victoria Falls.

Growth could come from floating solar projects at Kariba dam, increased generation at the coal-fed Hwange plant and opportunities for independent power producers, he said.



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Lack of investment

Last December, the government unveiled incentives meant to help bring 1,100MW of new solar projects on stream by 2025, but lack of investment in new energy projects has slowed progress.

ZESA fell short of its production target by 29% in the first quarter of 2023, worsening power cuts, it said in a report.

An initiative to allow mining companies to import power has also had a slow start due to lack of foreign currency.

"We have had a discontinuation of supply from Zambia and Mozambique because we failed to pay. After accumulated bills, imports were then discontinued on March 13," Choga said.

At the conference, miners complained of losing up to 12 hours of production time daily due to power cuts.

Mining, including of gold, platinum group metals, copper and diamonds, generated 80% of Zimbabwe's total export earnings last year.

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