

GCC grid to ensure stable power supply

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DOHA: The Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Industry, H E Abdullah bin Hamad Al Attiyah yesterday signed the general agreement of GCC Power Interconnection grid in the presence of GCC Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) Chairman, Engineer Yousuf Ahmed Janahi.

The agreement enables local grid authorities in the interconnected states, within its legal, commercial and technical framework, to enter into agreements with GCCIA for the use of interconnection lines and substations.

Local grid authorities are scheduled to sign the Power Exchange and Trading Agreement (PETA) within a few weeks after putting the final touches to it. The PETA sets out the regulations and procedures of electricity exchange and trading, during normal circumstances and in emergency cases, through the interconnection grid.

Al Attiyah told reporters at the signing ceremony that power connection between the GCC states was long overdue and was delayed because of a variety of reasons, including lack of sufficient efforts and suitable interconnection infrastructure in some member states.

The \$1.407bn GCC Interconnection Power Grid project is intended for electricity transmission between GCC countries and to ensure steady power supply for GCC member states. The three phases of the project are scheduled for completion by the end of 2010.

The actual operation of Phase 1 is slated for the second quarter of 2009. The experimental tests have been conducted to verify grid stability prior to the actual operation. Al Zour substation (Kuwait) has successfully undergone the first experimental operation. The first phase is planned to interconnect Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait.

"In the later stages, this will be connected to a power grid linking all Arab countries and eventually Europe," Al Attiyah said.

"Electricity is undoubtedly set to become a major trade commodity between countries in the foreseeable future, especially when the power grid extends to Europe, because we could supply them with electricity during winter, when it is much needed, and they could supply us with electricity during summer, thus creating a balance between demand and supply."

The power grid interconnecting GCC member states has a long-term strategic dimension and is very important particularly since it would help restore power faster in any member country in case of emergency, he added.

"The grid will have a great impact on electricity integration," Al Attiyah said. "The project is a significant step on the path to sustainable development we endeavor to achieve. It will also boost the capability of GCC countries in tackling future challenges."

Al Janahi pointed out that the giant project will help reduce investments allocated to power generation and boost the reliability of GCC power systems, which would ensure steady power supply within the GCC countries.