

'New grid projects to reduce power cuts'

23 August 2010

AMMAN - Projects will soon be implemented to increase the capacity of the Kingdom's electricity grid and address the issue of power shortages, officials said on Sunday.

According to National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) General Manager Ghaleb Maabreh, plans are in place to improve the capacity of the national electricity grid to handle higher loads.

"We are constantly working to update the electricity infrastructure in the country," Maabreh told The Jordan Times yesterday.

He added that projects to increase the generating capacity of the national grid by 520 megawatts (MW) were postponed due to the global financial crisis.

"Around 520 megawatts will be added to the power grid between November 2010 and January 2011," Maabreh said, pointing out that new power stations are added to the Kingdom's grid every two or three years.

"By 2013, between 500MW and 700MW will be added to the national grid capacity," he said, adding that the additional wattage will "stabilise" the electricity situation in the country.

Electricity Regulatory Commission Chief Commissioner Suleiman Hafez confirmed that more power stations will soon be operating in the Kingdom to increase the capacity of the power grid.

Commenting on power cuts witnessed in several places across the Kingdom over the past few days, Maabreh stressed that although loads on the grids registered considerable increases on Friday, electric companies were not requested to make any scheduled power cuts. On Saturday, however, the commission arranged for scheduled power cuts with the Amman District Electricity Company, he said, stressing that the blackouts "didn't last long".

Ziad Humsi, head of the emergency department at the Amman District Electricity Company, told The Jordan Times that "the effects of the recent heatwave on electricity generators were less severe than those of the previous heatwaves", adding that no long-duration power cuts were registered in the capital.

Humsi acknowledged that scheduled power cuts took place on Saturday near the Seventh Circle neighbourhood at NEPCO's request.

"Other power outages were caused by malfunctioning equipment due to the increase in the loads on power generators," he explained.

Rolling power outages have been a familiar phenomenon in various parts of the Kingdom this summer, during which temperatures have risen to unprecedented highs causing people to rely on air conditioners and other cooling equipment in a bid to beat the heat.

This led to an increase in the load on the Kingdom's power grid. Officials have indicated that during this summer's heatwaves, loads on the grid have reached unprecedented averages of around 2,590MW, close to the Kingdom's total generating capacity of 2,600MW.